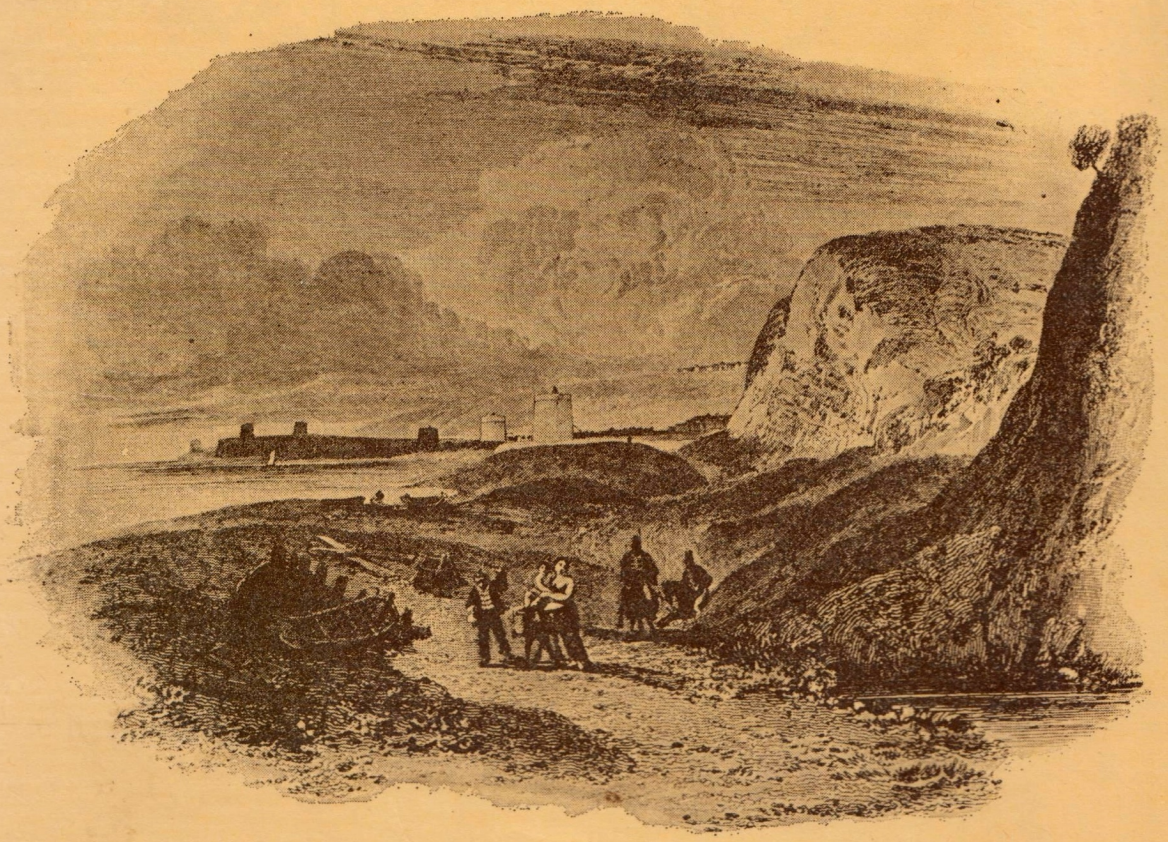
THE STORY OF BEXHILL

L. J. Bartley



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A native of East Sussex, where his father was active in religious and political life before the first world war, Mr Leonard James Bartley, who entered journalism in 1927 and has been Editor of the *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer* for the past 17 years, meets, with 'The Story of Bexhill,' a need that has long been felt.

Although there are many interesting facts about the town to be garnered from works of reference, nothing has previously appeared in book form designed for the general reader, and particularly to acquaint newcomers with the history of the place which so many have chosen to make their home.

While the author expresses the hope that his efforts will stimulate more exhaustive research and he makes no claim to be a scholar, it may well be a long time before his work is supplanted.

It covers not only ancient and medieval ground, but the story of the Manor of Bexhill under the famous Sackville family, and the development of the village, now the Old Town, into a select and flourishing late-Victorian and Edwardian seaside resort.

All aspects of the town's life are described, and the work constitutes a social history of unique value. Its publication on the eve of the borough's commemoration of the 1200th anniversary of the Saxon charter which began local recorded history is singularly opportune, and a debt of gratitude is due to all those who have helped to make this possible.

Price £4·20

£8-

With the Best Wishes
of the Author,
Leonard J. Bartley

THE STORY OF BEXHILL

THE STORY OF BEXHILL

by

L. J. Bartley
Editor of the 'Bexhill-on-Sea Observer'

1971
Published by F. J. Parsons, Ltd.
Bexhill-on-Sea
and Distributed by Gardner's of Bexhill, Ltd.

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To My Wife

For a support and forbearance that every newspaperman will understand

To My Parents

For an East Sussex background that forms much of the basis of this book

and

To the memory of A. E. ('Tom') Gardner, who did so much to further its publication.

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Preface

From THE BISHOP OF CHICHESTER

(THE RIGHT REVEREND R. P. WILSON, D.D.)

THE PUBLICATION of the first comprehensive history of Bexhill as a prelude to the town's Charter Celebration Year, will, I am sure, be received with pleasure and interest not only locally but throughout the county of Sussex and beyond. In writing this brief preface, I am bound to have in mind the close links which have always existed between Bexhill and Chichester.

These found their origin in that historic Charter, which also marks the beginning of Bexhill as a known place on the map. When King Offa granted to an illustrious predecessor of mine, Bishop Oswald, land for the building and endowing of a church at Bexhill, he began a small part of that historical process by which Sussex has been knit together in a closely woven structure over the centuries.

The developing life of the church in Sussex has been an important part of that process, and as the author of this book points out, the parish of St. Peter's exerted an immense influence on the development of Bexhill, not only in a specifically religious sense but in every department of its life.

As the town has grown in size other parishes have come into being mainly through the initiative and generosity of the clergy and people of the ancient parish church. The churches of other Christian traditions have also taken their increasing share in the life of the town and this history records how there has

grown up a strong ecumenical spirit which has achieved much in more recent years through the work of the Bexhill Council of Churches.

One of the main aims of the 1972 Celebrations, as expressed in the explanation of the symbol given at the end of this book, is to foster civic loyalties and a stronger sense of community among all citizens 'through a shared resolve to hold fast to all that is good'. A full and carefully documented local history will most surely play an important part in the fulfilling of this aim. For in all our associations with places as with people, knowledge deepens affection. The more we know about the place in which we live, the greater will be our regard for it.

Bexhill as I have known it myself on the many occasions I have visited it, already possesses a strong sense of community. I am sure that this book and the events of the Charter Celebration Year will do much to strengthen and encourage all those qualities of common caring and good neighbourliness which flow from it.

From LORD BUCKHURST

It gives me the greatest pleasure to join the Bishop of Chichester in writing a Preface to 'The Story of Bexhill'. I could not begin, however, without paying a tribute to the author, whom I have known for many years. He has given a great deal of public service to Bexhill, and it goes without saying that, without any exaggeration, he is one of the greatest living experts on the history of our town. I wish his efforts the greatest of good fortune.

My family, that is the Sackville family, has owned the Lordship of the Manor of Bexhill for about 400 years since it was granted by Queen Elizabeth I to my ancestor Baron Buckhurst, 1st Earl of Dorset. In 1821 the Sackville family was united by marriage with the De La Warr family, and thus all the property of Bexhill passed into the hands of Earl De La Warr.

It was not until 1883 that my great-grandfather built the East Parade, and it was this that opened the way for the whole development of Bexhill as the high class seaside resort that it is today. It was my grandfather, the 8th Earl, who really made Bexhill his home. It was he who, as Viscount Cantelupe, came to live in Bexhill, enlarged the Manor House and embarked on large-scale development of the town. Now that the family no longer lives at Bexhill, the recent brilliant redevelopment of the old Manor House and its grounds into an amenity for the inhabitants is a fitting tribute to his deep affection for the town—an affection which still exists today in the whole of my family.

It was my father, during his three years as Mayor of Bexhill, who was responsible for the building of the De La Warr Pavilion. I myself am bound to say, with all humility, that I wonder very much what Bexhill would do without that controversial edifice!

It is very fitting that 'The Story of Bexhill' should be published in time for the year 1972—just 1200 years after King Offa granted a charter which founded St. Peter's Church. I am very proud to be associated with this history.

Introduction

THIS IS THE first attempt to bring into one volume for the general reader more than a thousand years of the history of Bexhill. One purpose is to meet the demand by newcomers for some account of the town in which they have come to reside; another to stimulate research by more competent scholars, for there is still a rich harvest to be gathered. The present work has been condensed from a series of articles on the town's development published in the *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer* from 1966 onwards, to which chapters on earlier periods have been added.

Its publication at this 1200th anniversary of the Saxon charter which started Bexhill's recorded history is due to the initiative of Councillor D. A. Kimber (Mayor of the Borough 1970–71) and the Rector of St. Peter's Church (Canon M. D. Townroe, R.D.). Special thanks are also due for encouragement and help to Lord Buckhurst; the Mayor and Corporation of Bexhill, with the Town Clerk (Mr. R. S. Robinson) and other Borough officials; the Curator of the Borough Museum (Mr. H. J. Sargent); the East Sussex County Record Office; the Bexhill branch of the East Sussex County Library; Hastings County Borough Public Library; the Public Record Office; the Newspaper Library of the British Museum; the Library of the Ministry of Defence (War Office); H.M. Customs and Excise Library and the British Transport Historical Records Office. Many other sources of assistance are not less appreciated for being too numerous to detail.

The author's gratitude is due to the Chairman and Directors of F. J. Parsons Ltd. for the production and the publication of this volume; to Gardner's of Bexhill Ltd. for undertaking the major part of the distribution, especially to the late Mr. A. E. ('Tom') Gardner a valued friend of many years and to whom the volume forms a memorial tribute; and to many colleagues for technical advice, the exercise of their skill and infinite patience. Among so many it is difficult to mention names, but especial appreciation is due to Mr. R. Reeve, manager of the Bexhill printing works of F. J. Parsons Ltd., an unfailingly helpful friend and colleague for the past 17 years, and to Miss Mary Dean for secretarial assistance. A debt that can never be repaid is due to his predecessors in the editorial chair of the *Bexhill-*

on-Sea Observer and to those who similarly served the former *Bexhill Chronicle.* Without the files of these journals such a work as this could never have been undertaken.

Canon and Mrs. Townroe kindly read the proofs and their valuable suggestions have been gratefully accepted.

Acknowledgment is gratefully tendered to those who have kindly loaned illustrations or courteously given permission for reproductions to be included, and such help is noted in the list on pages ix–xiii.

For any errors the author accepts the blame, and he is conscious of many omissions inevitable in keeping the work to a limit suitable and economic for publication. As such it is offered in the hope that it will give pleasure to many and be accepted as a token of the author's gratitude for the happy years spent in Bexhill to which he first came as a child nearly 60 years ago.

CHAPTER ONE

The Ancient Scene

THE SOUTH-EASTERLY RIDGE ending in Fairlight cliffs throws a number of spurs and at the end of one of these was the settlement which became the Saxon village of Bexhill and is now its Old Town.

Evidence of pre-historic life lies in fossilised footprint impressions of the Mesozoic Age iguanadon, recorded in the Geological Society *Journal* between 1846 and 1862. An iguanadon vertebra was found when Egerton Park lake was dug in 1888 and further finds are recorded off Cooden. The discovery of six Bronze Age celts (a chisel-edged instrument) near Normans Bay was detailed in 1892 and two years later that of a few flint arrowheads. In 1864 the remains of an ancient boat were found in the blue Wealden clay near South Cliff, and when again exposed by the sea in the 1880s it was found to be an oak clinker-type coracle some nine feet long. The remains of a primitive oak-pegged shallop were also found in the Egerton Park digging.

The great fortress of Anderida at Pevensey ensures that the Romans knew the area, if indeed the 'lost town' of Northeye, a site now within the borough of Bexhill, were not one of their smaller ports. According to the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' Anderida fell to the Saxons about the end of the 5th century AD after the withdrawal of the Roman legions.

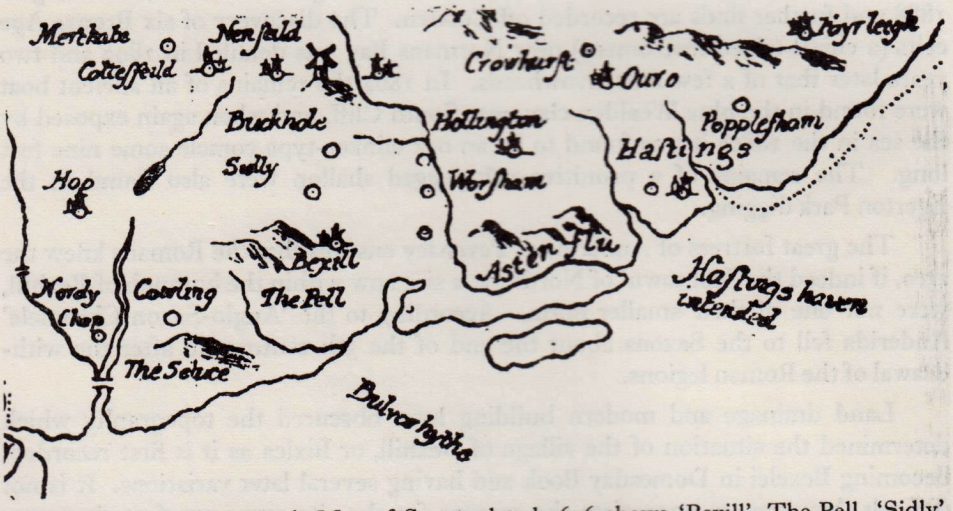
Land drainage and modern building have obscured the topography which determined the situation of the village of Bexhill, or Bixlea as it is first recorded, becoming Bexelei in Domesday Book and having several later variations. It is not difficult, however, to appreciate the reasons for the site some 150 feet above sea level: The steep slopes protecting three sides, with the ridge eastwards along which Hastings Road joins the highway from the ancient port of Bulverhythe. Its views commanded an immense sweep of the Channel including the haven of Pevensey where the Conqueror landed.

West of the valley which separates the Old Town from Bexhill Down and the higher ground to the north, a low, undulating ridge extends to Barnhorn over-

looking Pevensey marsh, with a southerly branch to Cooden Down. This area retained for centuries a greater community of interest with the Pevensey Levels, both for reasons of geography and the separate lordship of its manors. That of Barnhorn was held by Battle Abbey for 400 years until the Reformation. The name of Little Common, now generally applied to the area, does not appear on Sussex maps until that of the Ordnance Survey dated 1813, but in 1805 the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* reported the murder of a soldier of the King's German Legion (which was stationed at Bexhill), and whose body was found on 'Little Common', a tract of land known for centuries as 'Slyder's Common', and which lay between Cooden Down and the present village.

North-west of Barnhorn spurs from the higher ground descend like fingers to the marsh, ending in the parishes of Hooe and Wartling, separated by the Ashbourne River which was an artery for the shipment of iron forged in the ancient workings of the district. The great Ashburnham forge itself survived until early in the 19th century.

Sidley, formerly a hamlet on the high road inland from Bulverhythe, was in existence by the 15th century for the forge there, which closed in the 1950s, had been worked for 500 years.



I.—This section of Norden's Map of Sussex dated 1616 shows 'Bexill', The Pell, 'Sidly', Buckholt, 'Cooding', The Sluice (Normans Bay) and 'Nordy' Chapel. The Pell stream running into the sea is clearly indicated.

Isolated on its hill from the sea, Bexhill had little maritime interest except through Bulverhythe and Northeye which became Limbs of the Cinque Port of Hastings. Nevertheless the vagaries of the Channel during the centuries have not been without local influence. Land has been gained and lost. Galley Hill and South

Cliff, or rather the low range of cliffs, once extended much farther seawards even within living memory. Martello towers erected on them as part of the defences against Napoleon have long vanished, as have all but one of the remainder along the parish foreshore. In the last century a farmer tenant at Galley Hill obtained a rent reduction from the War Department because of the loss of land to the sea. Between Galley Hill and South Cliff the small promontory of The Horn, separating salt marshes later embanked by the East and West parades, is now hardly distinguishable as the site of the De La Warr Pavilion, but in the last century the coastguard station which stood there was often marooned. In rough weather the sea would sweep as far as the Sackville Arch (then a cattle access) or up Sea Lane to where St. Barnabas' Church now stands.

Until the parade embankments were built, the first in 1883, the lower reaches of modern Bexhill were marsh or swamplands providing rough grazing. In 1927 W. H. Mullens, a High Sheriff of Sussex and mayor of Bexhill, could record that there were men still living who had shot wildfowl where the Town Hall now stands. This area drained into The Pell, a stream discharging to the sea where Channel View now is. In the 18th century The Pell was used by the Dukes of Dorset, Lords of the Manor of Bexhill, for wildfowling and they maintained the Manor House, now demolished, as a shooting lodge. In 1863 the Sussex historian M. A. Lower referred to a 'small nameless stream' at Bexhill, not more than a mile or two in length, which found its way to the sea beneath the shingle. This indicates the accumulation of the shingle bank caused by the eastward drift of the Channel which created Dungeness and helped to destroy the ancient harbours of the south-east coast. The stream, which flows from Sidley between the Old Town and the Down, became an open sewer meandering through what is now Egerton Park, where the lake was artificially formed from streams which coursed between the mudbanks. Westwards, where Cooden golf course now stretches, a large lagoon is marked on maps of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The whole coast was much more indented than it is today. Vanished are the ancient ports and long silted up or embanked to form rich farming land the great stretches of Pevensey haven and Romney marsh, as well as smaller estuaries such as that of the Asten. This stream rises at Battle and, joined by the Watermill and Combe Haven streams north-east of Bexhill, enters the sea at Bulverhythe. As late as the 14th century there was a ferry across the estuary there and the original road was known as the Causeway.

On the west, Hooe Level, the area of the Commissioners of the Pevensey Levels which was nearest to the higher ground, was early reclaimed from the sea, but the marsh rivers continued to discharge at Pevensey until the Ashbourne cut from Dowle Corner to a new sluice outfall (now Normans Bay) was completed in the middle of the 15th century. The diversion speeded the silting up of the old haven at Pevensey and the outfall moved westwards during the 16th century. The

Sluice, as it became known, really supplanted Pevensey as the marsh port and was recognised as a Liberty of Hastings in succession to Northeye. Nevertheless in the last century the old winding road across the marsh, now cut by the modern highway, was twice diverted inland after storm inundations and in 1909 severe floods made the area a vast lake indicative of its appearance before the medieval drainage.

Land lost to the sea, and in the 19th century one farm lost 40 out of 1,000 acres in 50 years so that a quinquennial valuation for rating was usual, includes the submerged forests of which there are several examples round the coast. The local remains are on the east side of Galley Hill and off Cooden. The latter were recorded early in the last century by one of the commissioners of the Pevensey Levels in a letter to *The Gentlemen's Magazine*. There were then some 200 stumps of oak and birch trees which stood four feet above the surface at low water. In 1892 a correspondent to the Sussex Archeological Society described remains including the skeletons of a man and horse, bones of a deer with antlers, wolves and squirrels with hoards of nuts. Oak tree trunks up to 18 inches in diameter had been snapped as though by a tremendous gale from the south-west. It is difficult not to associate this with the great storms of the 13th century, one of which destroyed Old Winchelsea, did great damage on Pevensey marsh and may have contributed to the decay of Northeye.

CHAPTER TWO

Hundred and Manors

THE HUNDRED OF BEXHILL, providing that number of securities for the King's peace, was in the kingdom of the South Saxons and ecclesiastically in the See of Selsey, founded by St. Wilfrid in 681 and the seat of which was transferred to Chichester in 1075. The Hundred comprised the parishes of Bexhill and St. Mary, Bulverhythe, although the latter became a Limb of Hastings. After the Conquest, when Sussex was divided into six rapes, a division peculiar to the county, the Hundred of Bexhill was one of 13 in the Rape of Hastings which extended from the Kent border to Pevensey. With the Hundred of Gostrow (Brede and Udimore) it continued to enjoy exemption from various tolls and services, and the Hundred of Battle was similarly enfranchised. The jurisdiction of Hastings as a Cinque Port extended also to the Liberty of Northeye and later that of The Sluice. These latter, with the manors of Barnhorn and Cooden were in the adjoining Hundred of Ninfield, the boundary between the two Hundreds running from Lunsford Cross to the sea at South Cliff.

Manor of Bexhill

The South Saxons were conquered by Offa II, King of Mercia, remembered today for the protective dyke from Flintshire to the River Wye, which bears his name. Offa made a grant of eight hides of land, equal to nearly 500 acres, at Bexhill to build and endow a church, and this became the parish church of St. Peter's, the oldest part of which, now hidden in the walls, has thus stood for 1,200 years. The original charter is not extant, but a medieval document in the Lambeth records, written in Latin, with the bounds of the church lands defined in Anglo-Saxon, gives the date of Offa's grant to Bishop Oswald, with reversion to the See of Selsey at his death, as 15 August 772. This is the first recorded date in Bexhill's history.

The medieval document is regarded as a copy of the original, though the distinguished editor of the 'Victoria County History of Sussex', L. F. Salzmann,

wrote in 1910 that it 'is usually admitted to be a forgery, but no doubt based on a genuine grant, and the boundaries may be accepted as at least pre-Conquest'. However, and without legal question, it has formed the basis of the history of Bexhill for well over a thousand years, granting church lands of which the last few acres were sold as recently as 1953, so that few would demur from the summing up of Canon Clifford Earwaker in his 'The Story of St. Peter's' (1959): 'There can be little question about the authenticity of a charter, even though it was signed nearly 12 centuries ago, if the grant it then made to the Church now brings in more than £300 every year and will continue to do so for all time'. Moreover a writer on medieval Bexhill, the Rev. F. C. Hamlyn, has called attention to the authoritative 'Anglo-Saxon England' of Professor Sir Frank Stenton who, writing of Offa's grant says 'a charter of 772 shows him granting land to the Bishop of Selsey at a court attended by Egbert, King of Kent; Cynewulf, King of Wessex, and four Saxon magnates, to each of whom he accorded the title of "Dux",' and Professor Stenton adds 'the portion of the witness lists where these names occur includes those appropriate to the period which no forger would have been likely to know and it does not read like a fabrication'.

In addition to the eight hides at Bexhill, Offa's grant enumerated three hides at Barnhorn, one at Worsham, eight at Crowhurst and three at Icklesham, among the endowment of the foundation. The Icklesham grant gave rise to trouble in Norman times.

This grant was not Offa's only benefaction to Sussex which, with the county of Surrey, formed the South Saxon kingdom. He confirmed the gift by one of his chieftains of the havens of Pevensey and Bulverhythe to the abbey of St. Denis in Paris, a link broken when the Normans conquered the lower reaches of the River Seine. More than 200 years later, Edward the Confessor, by bestowing Rye, Winchelsea and part of what is now old Hastings on the French abbey of Fecamp facilitated the invasion of 1066.

After the Norman landing at Pevensey the invading army moved over the high ground at the rear to a defensive position on the Hastings peninsula, until advancing along the Telham ridge to the battlefield where the fate of England was decided. Bexhill was among the places devastated by the Normans and the Domesday survey shows that 20 years later it had not recovered its former worth. Similar comparisons for other places show the passage of the Conqueror.

When William lavishly rewarded his principal captains, Bexhill, then comprising 60 hides, equal to some 1,200 acres (less than one-sixth of the modern borough) and including the Church land, was given as part of the Rape of Hastings to Robert, Count of Eu, a relative of the Conqueror. Bexhill formed the western outpost along the coast of Count Robert's territory, adjoining the Rape of Pevensey which was initially held by another Robert, Earl of Mortain, a half-brother of King William. Count Robert of Eu founded the French Benedictine abbey of

Tréport, granting some 150 acres of land in the Hundred of Bexhill as part of its endowment. This became the Manor of Pebsham which, with other Tréport holdings in the Rape of Hastings, was conveyed to the Cistercian abbey of Robertsbridge (of which a few portions survive) on its foundation in 1176.

At Bexhill Count Robert added a tower to the little Saxon church, and when he founded the Collegiate Church of St. Mary in Hastings Castle (of which the ancient dedication is preserved in the early 19th-century church under the cliff there) he made Bexhill with Bulverhythe the second of its ten prebends and endowed it with land and an annual grant of 2,000 herrings, an indication of the importance of the coastal fisheries. The first prebend of the collegiate church was that of Wartling, from which Hooe and Ninfield were separated in the 13th century. The Bexhill prebend also received the gift of a house of residence from Robert Creol whom Domesday names as holding land in the village, and it was from this that the manor house derived. Robert Creol also held the manor of Ashburnham. At Bexhill Count Robert retained three hides of land as his demesne and Domesday records that he had leased ten hides to one Osbern and the remainder between six lay tenants, except for one hide which was part of the endowment of the prebend. This was held by Geoffrey and Roger, clerks, the first names to survive in the long list of incumbents of St. Peter's Church.

Domesday mentions two churches at Bexhill, one obviously that founded by Offa, and the other presumed to be that of Northeye, rather than the chapel at Bulverhythe of which a few ruins still stand behind the Bull Inn. This Northeye chapel stood on the height of Constable's (now Hill) farm just north of the present Barnhorn Road. A chapel near the site of Northeye itself on the marsh was of a later date.

The Church did not accept willingly the loss of its Bexhill lands to the Eu family as lords of the Rape of Hastings, and after three bishops of Chichester had failed to secure redress, the See was successful in 1148 when Count Robert's grandson John acknowledged in proceedings at St. Paul's Church, London, that his grandfather had acted unjustly. This admission was witnessed by the Abbot of Westminster and several bishops and was confirmed by King Stephen. Chichester Cathedral registers show that in making restoration to Bishop Hilary Count John declared that he retained nothing of the Church's possessions in Bexhill, but he clearly kept other land including that which became the manors of Buckholt and Cooden whose ownership descended with the lordship of the Rape. In Edward II's reign the Earl of Richmond, who then held the lordship, was granted a charter for a weekly market to be held at Bexhill on Mondays, and a fair on four days yearly—the eve and day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and two days after the fair at Bulverhythe. The tradition of what became known as 'Old Bexhill fair', lasted into the 19th century, when one memory was of two 'snuff-box girls' having a fight in the churchyard on the occasion of one of the

fairs, at which snuff-boxes were thrown for as coconuts are now.

With the Manor of Bexhill returned to the Church, which thereafter retained it for more than 400 years, the Bexhill and Bulverhythe prebend of the collegiate church at Hastings, which claimed independence from the jurisdiction of the bishops of Chichester, became that of Bulverhythe only. The house which Robert Creol had presented developed into the eastern residence of the bishops on their peregrinations from Chichester, a circumstance that gave Bexhill much importance in the medieval diocese and county. A measure of that status is that in 1447 in the reign of Henry VI, when England was losing her possessions in France to the forces of Joan of Arc, Bishop Adam de Moleyns was granted a licence to embattle the manor and enclose it with stone, though no evidence survives that this work was carried out. Moleyns was killed during the Jack Cade rebellion several years later.

The most famous medieval bishops and of the greatest importance to Bexhill were successively Ralph Neville and St. Richard de Wych in the 13th century. The former, who was Henry III's Chancellor and a notable patron of church building, added to St. Peter's and also greatly improved agricultural conditions, as letters between him and his steward show. St. Richard, one of the most celebrated names in the history of the diocese, and who died on a journey from Bexhill to Dover, is commemorated, with St. Wilfrid the founder of the See, in the modern mural in St. Peter's Church as well as by the Roman Catholic secondary school of that name.

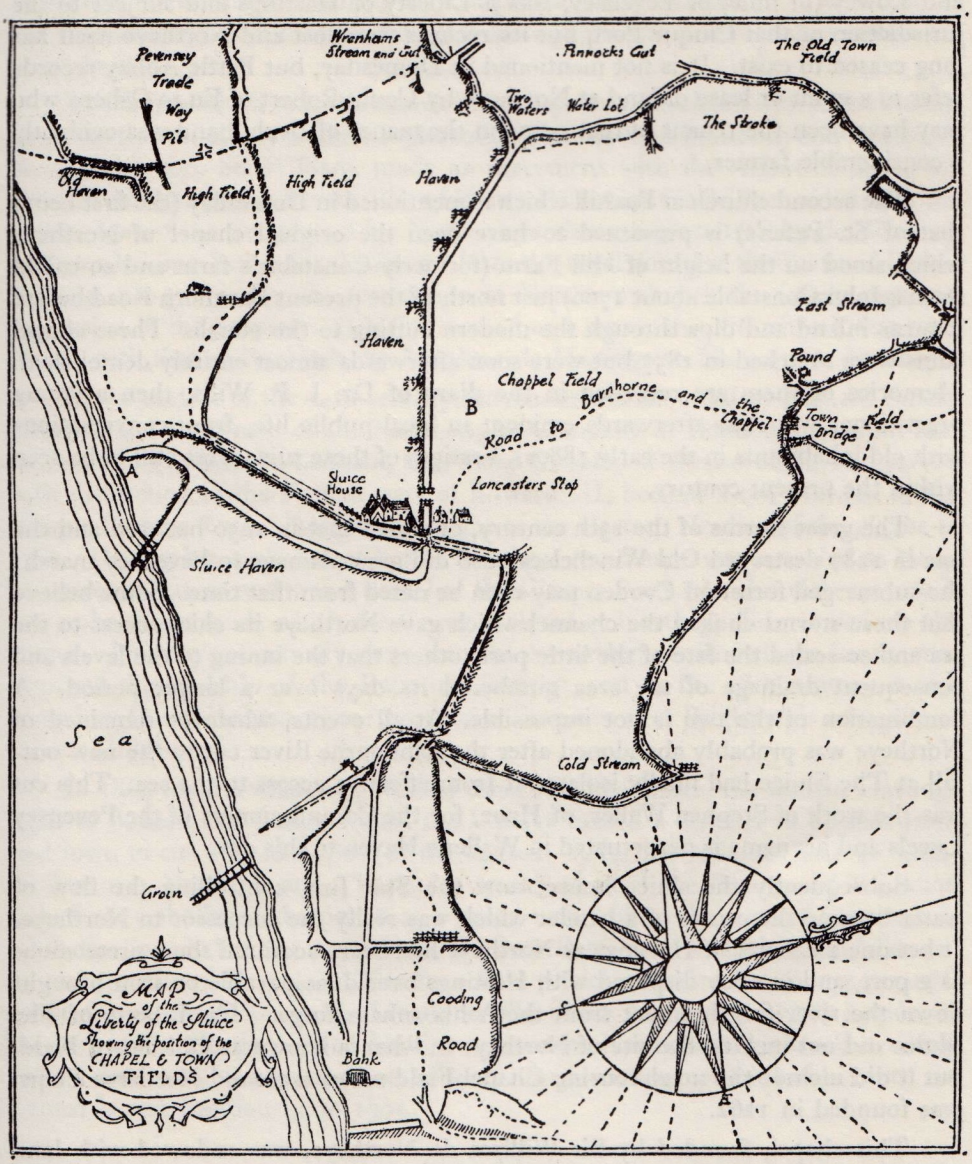
After Bexhill's connection with the collegiate church ceased there were long disputes about the jurisdiction over the Hastings college which the Crown claimed as a royal free chapel. The right of the diocese was not confirmed until the 15th century, but a hundred years later the college was suppressed by Henry VIII.

Other Manors

Apart from the Manor of Bexhill, owned successively by the Church, the Rape of Hastings, again by the Church, and then, after an interval in the hands of the Crown, by the Sackville family, there were several other manors on the outskirts of the area covered by the present borough. Their history reveals links between Bexhill, the great religious houses and famous Sussex families, now almost forgotten.

NORTHEYE

Among these manors was the 'lost town' of Northeye which stood between Normans Bay and the higher ground of Barnhorn. It was originally one of the islands in the Pevensey haven and became part of Hooe Level which, near the up-



II.—A map of The Sluice (Normans Bay) drawn in 1748 by Samuel Cant, a schoolmaster, for Hastings Corporation, The Sluice area being a Limb of the Cinque Port of Hastings in succession to the vanished Northeye.

land, was one of the first parts of the marsh to be drained. Northeye, like the town and Lowey (or mile) of Pevensey, was a Liberty of Hastings and subject to the jurisdiction of that Cinque Port, but its records were lost and Northeye itself has long ceased to exist. It is not mentioned in Domesday, but Battle Abbey records refer to a grant or lease of land at Northeye by Count Robert of Eu to Osbern who may have been the tenant of that name in the manor of Bexhill and was evidently a considerable farmer.

The second church at Bexhill which is mentioned in Domesday (the first being that of St. Peter's) is presumed to have been the original chapel of Northeye which stood on the height of Hill Farm (formerly Constable's farm and so-called from a John Constable about 1700) just north of the present Barnhorn Road before it turns inland and dips through the modern cutting to the marsh. These chapel ruins were sketched in 1857 but were soon afterwards almost entirely demolished. Memories of them are recorded in the diary of Dr. J. P. Wills, then a young practitioner who was afterwards eminent in local public life, from conversations with old inhabitants in the early 1880s. Vestiges of these ruins were still to be seen within the present century.

The great storms of the 13th century, of which that in 1250 battered and the one in 1287 destroyed Old Winchelsea, also did great damage to Pevensey marsh; the submerged forest off Cooden may even be dated from that time. Some believe that these storms choked the channel which gave Northeye its chief access to the sea and so sealed the fate of the little port; others that the inning of the levels and consequent drainage of the area numbered its days over a longer period. A combination of the two is not impossible. At all events, whatever remained of Northeye was probably abandoned after the Ashbourne River cut to the new outfall at The Sluice had finally isolated it from effective access to the sea. This cut was the work of Stephen Waller, of Hooe, for the Commissioners of the Pevensey Levels and his name is perpetuated in Waller's Haven to this day.

Subsequently the sluice house, now the Star Inn, controlling the flow of water became the centre of a hamlet which was really the successor to Northeye. It became a Liberty of Hastings as Northeye had been, acquired some pretensions as a port, and in 1607 disputed with Hastings over dues payable on iron brought down the river for shipment from the Ashburnham forge. The Liberty of The Sluice did not include the site of Northeye in what is known as Old Town Field, but it did include the neighbouring Chapel Field where a second Northeye chapel was founded in 1262.

This chapel, founded by Sir William de Northeye, was endowed with land including a holding at Whydown. The last chaplain was appointed in 1440 but the chapel may have continued in use until into the next century. Its ruins are marked on maps of the 17th and 18th centuries but the stones were gradually taken for road-building work as were those of the town itself, so that today no trace remains

above ground and Northeye is known only as the 'lost town'. Outlines of the foundations were plotted during an exceptionally dry summer in the middle of the 19th century, and in 1938 and again in 1952 the site provided an exercise for archeologists.

The family which took the name of Northeye was associated with the township from the time of Henry I when Ingleram de Northie held Barnhorn and Buckholt. In 1248 his son, Sir William, made an agreement with the Abbot of Battle for marsh drainage. In the Barons War of Henry III's reign Sir William sided with the barons against the Crown and his Northeye lands were given to John de Warenne who was holding Lewes for the King. After the royal defeat at the Battle of Lewes in 1264, two years after the foundation of Northeye chapel, the family regained possession of the property. It is first named as a manor in 1276 when it was conveyed, with that of Buckholt, by Matthew de Hastings to Margery de Northeye.

In the middle of the 14th century the manor was acquired by Richard Smelt, a citizen and liveryman of the Fishmongers Company of London, and from him it passed to Reynold de Cobham, later Lord Cobham of Sterborough, who served with distinction in the French wars of Edward III, became Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports and was nominated a knight of the Garter. He died of the plague in 1361. During his son's ownership of Northeye the manor was recorded as being 300 acres in extent and was a parcel of the Cinque Ports. In the 16th century it was upheld that lands which the Crown claimed at Northeye did not include the manor. Northeye eventually came into the ownership of the Pelham family who acquired the lordship of the Rape of Hastings, and in the 18th century it was owned by Henry Pelham whose mansion at Stanmer, near Brighton, is now part of Sussex University.

In 1864 when a whale was washed ashore at The Sluice, the ancient Hastings right to flotsam and jetsam within the Liberty caused a butcher to be sent from that town to cut up and dispose of the carcase. A further relic of Hastings' jurisdiction over Northeye and The Sluice remained until the Rating and Valuation Act of 1925 abolished the parish as a rating unit. Since the time of Elizabeth I, when the Poor Relief Act was passed, the Poor Rate was not 'made' until 'allowed' by two justices of the peace. The Poor Rate (which included the county precept) raised from assessments in the Liberty of The Sluice was signed by two justices of the borough of Hastings. The Sluice was renamed Normans Bay when the railway halt of that name was opened for the motor train service inaugurated between St. Leonards and Eastbourne in 1905.

PEBSHAM

The manor of Pebsham, a name subject to various spellings over the ages, lay between Bexhill and Bulverhythe and was originally part of the endowment by Count Robert of Eu of his foundation of the Benedictine abbey of Tréport in

France in the reign of William I. The endowment was transferred to the new abbey of the Cistercians, a stricter branch of the Benedictines, at Robertsbridge in the 12th century. The first tenant known is John, son of John de Peplesham, in 1254. In the 15th century the manor of Pebsham was held by Lady Joan Brenchley and linked by marriage with that of Cooden. It was Lady Joan who by her will in 1453 provided for the Batesford Chapel in St. Peter's Church in memory of her husband and parents.

At the dissolution of the monasteries Pebsham passed into the ownership of the manor of Robertsbridge until that lapsed in the 17th century when Pebsham became the property of the Pelham family and thus reverted to its ancient link with the lordship of the Rape of Hastings. The records of Pebsham as a manor cease in the following century.

BARNHORN

Barnhorn, in the Hundred of Ninfield, first described as a manor in the 12th century, was bought from Withelard de Baillol in Henry I's reign by the Abbey of St. Martin at Battle, which had been founded and endowed by the Conqueror in commemoration of his victory. The purchase of some 180 acres, later increased as part of Abbot Ralph's investment policy, was confirmed by the Count of Eu as overlord of the Rape of Hastings, and also by the Crown.

The abbey so improved the Barnhorn holding, building a mill and houses, that in Henry II's reign Baillol's grandson seized the property and mortgaged it, an action which led to proceedings at Winchester before the King's justiciars in which the abbey's ownership was upheld. In the same reign the Barnhorn estate, adjoining which there was land under Offa's original grant, was involved in a dispute with Robert of Icklesham, a parish in which was a similar endowment. Robert alleged that the boundaries of the estate were wrongly marked and tried to seize that part of a hay crop which was on the disputed land, but the abbey servants resisted and secured it. The abbey's case against Robert was upheld in proceedings before the King's Council at Clarendon, a name noted for the Constitutions adopted there which asserted the supremacy of the State over the clergy and led to the murder of Archbishop Becket. The sheriffs of Sussex were ordered to appoint 12 local men to walk the bounds of the Barnhorn property and also those of Buckholt on the north-east edge of the present borough of Bexhill, and which at that time paid tithes to Battle Abbey. Manorial courts were held at Barnhorn in pre-Reformation times, and afterwards courts baron. In 1306 there is mention of a furnace at Lower Barnhorn, identified by Ernest Straker, author of 'Wealden Iron', as the site of one of three bloomeries in Bexhill, and the following year the manor is recorded as comprising more than 400 acres of farmland, with a dovecot and windmill. The holding also included 100 acres of land belonging to the Bishop of Chichester's manor of Bexhill.

At the dissolution of the monasteries, Battle Abbey, with the manor of Barnhorn among other properties, was given to Sir Anthony Browne, Master of the Horse to Henry VIII and who, as one of the executors of that monarch's will, later had Princess (the future Queen) Elizabeth I under his care. His son Anthony was ennobled as Viscount Montagu and the last holder of that title sold the estates, including the manor of Barnhorn, to Sir Thomas Webster in 1719. After a 19th-century occupation by the ducal family of Cleveland, a title now extinct, the estates became restored to the Webster family through whom the present Battle Abbey Estate still owns some 60 acres of Barnhorn land together with the title of the manor. This now has no benefits but nevertheless provides a remarkable reminder of the ancient association of that part of Bexhill with the great abbey of Battle founded by the Conqueror.

BUCKHOLT

The manor of Buckholt, first noted as such in 1276, was in Henry I's reign held jointly with that of Barnhorn and paid tithes to Battle Abbey, an undertaking confirmed by Henry Count of Eu, overlord of the Rape of Hastings in succession to his father Robert. In the dispute which involved Barnhorn in Henry II's reign the bounds of the Buckholt estate were ordered to be walked and thus confirmed. A park at Buckholt (that is an area enclosed for beasts of the chase), some of which was on the north side of the Watermill stream in the parish of Crowhurst, was in the gift of the bishops of Chichester and was probably part of the park attached to the manor of Bexhill. In 1390 Bishop Richard de Metford granted Buckholt park to William de Northeye on a yearly rental of one 'fat deer and one fox net.' In the 14th century Buckholt manor was held by William Batesford and then by his daughter Joan whose bequest of the chapel in St. Peter's Church has been noted.

The manor afterwards passed to the Fiennes family of Herstmonceux where Sir Roger de Fiennes, a veteran of Agincourt, had built the great brick castle in 1441, and which is now the home of the Royal Observatory. Roger's son married a daughter of Thomas Lord Dacre and their descendants were known as the Lords Dacre of the South. In the 16th century the family owned the furnace and forge of Buckholt on the north side of the Watermill stream to the manor house, a circumstance recorded in connection with the tenancy of Bartholomew Jeffreys who died in 1575 and was buried at Bexhill. By his will he left the working of the forge to Thomas Alfray in payment of his debts. The Buckholt link with Herstmonceux was broken in 1708 when the Herstmonceux estate was sold to pay family debts. Eighty years later, when Buckholt was again sold, it was described as 'pleasantly situated in the centre of a large manor which abounds with game of every kind'. In the 19th century it became part of the Normanhurst estates of the Brassey family and a spring discovered on it provided part of Bexhill's first public water supply.

COODEN

The records of Battle Abbey tell us that Count Robert of Eu, Lord of the Rape of Hastings, granted to John de Coding land which became known as Cooden, the name having various spellings during the centuries. Although it became part of the parish of Bexhill it was in the Hundred of Ninfield. The Coding family was an important one in the district but died out early in the 16th century. A 13th-century document dealing with the drainage of Pevensey marsh states that Cooden was earlier called Codyneshaven and refers to an old sewer (dyke) extending to the former port of Cooden. In the 13th century the Coding family built a moated house of which only the moat remains, in a sorry state since concrete tank traps were deposited there after the second world war. It is to be found between Maple Walk and Cooden Wood near the footpath to Lower Barnhorn.

From the lordship of the Rape of Hastings the ownership of the manor of Cooden passed to St. Stephen's College, Westminster. This was the chapel founded by King Stephen in the Palace of Westminster. In 1348 Edward III ordained that the college should consist of a dean, 12 secular canons, 13 vicars, 4 clerks and 6 choristers. When Parliament divided into two Houses in the 14th century the knights and burgesses met in St. Stephen's Chapel which thus became the House of Commons. In the same century the manor of Cooden was held by William Brenchley and through marriage linked with the manors of Pebsham and Buckholt. St. Stephen's College was dissolved at the Reformation and all except the crypt destroyed in the great fire of the Palace of Westminster in 1834 after which the present Houses of Parliament were built over the site. Cooden was a link in the south coast defences against the Armada threat in 1588. Cooden Down was the site of a beacon and trenches were ordered to be made at the haven mouth, with artillery support against a possible Spanish landing.

The manor of Cooden eventually passed to the Sackville family and its descent is thereafter linked with that of the manor of Bexhill. It was on part of the old Cooden manor that the 8th Earl De La Warr laid out the famous golf course opened in 1912. Where Cooden Beach Hotel now stands there was once the largest barn in the district, used not only for the storage of corn, but its grinding by oxen which were commonly employed in local agriculture. The high ground of Cooden Down, over which Cooden Sea Road runs to Little Common, was chosen in 1860 for Army tests of 32- and 68-pounder guns, the target being one of the Martello towers on the foreshore. The proceedings were watched by the Commander-in-Chief of the Army (the Duke of Cambridge) and a crowd of some 5,000 assembled.

GLYNE

Glyne, where the old farmhouse still stands, though amid modern development, on the eastern edge of the borough, was recorded as a manor early in the 16th century and was granted in 1528 to John Baker, the King's Attorney General,

but was sold in 1647 and later passed to the Alfray family who acquired the working of the Buckholt forge. The records of the manor cease in the 1670s.

GOTHAM

Gotham, on the north-western boundary, was a manor in the 15th century when it was held by Richard Lyvet, whose son Thomas granted it to Sir James Fiennes, of the family which became the Lords Dacre of Herstmonceux, but the grant was disputed in 1445 by Thomas's daughter Elizabeth and her husband. Records of Gotham as a manor cease after 1819, but the house survives.

CHAPTER THREE

Sackville Lordship

THE CHURCH RETAINED the manor of Bexhill until the bishopric fell vacant in 1561 when, under an Act of Parliament passed in the first year of her reign, Elizabeth I acquired it, with seven others in the diocese, by a deed of exchange. In 1570 the Queen granted the manor to Thomas, son of Sir Richard Sackville, of Buckhurst in the Sussex parish of Withyham, and the family association has remained unbroken for more than 400 years. The family, which traces its history to Norman times, acquired the Buckhurst estate by marriage about the year 1200 and built there the mansion known as Old Buckhurst. Its ruins show it to have been of formidable size, evidence of the growing Sackville wealth and family importance. (The mansion of Buckhurst Park was built on a new site on the estate in the 18th century.)

Sir Richard Sackville, who was a cousin of Anne Boleyn, mother of Queen Elizabeth, became a man of great wealth in Henry VIII's reign with an estate in the City of London between Fleet Street and the River Thames. His son (1536–1608) retained the confidence and friendship of the Queen throughout her reign and was no less honoured by her successor, James I. He held a number of great offices, being Chancellor of Oxford, Lord High Treasurer, Lord High Steward, and was a Knight of the Garter; he conducted embassies to France and the Low Countries and had the melancholy duty of telling Mary Queen of Scots of the death sentence passed on her. A poet, he was co-author of the first English tragedy in blank verse. In 1566 Elizabeth granted him the great estate of Knole, at Sevenoaks, which remains in a branch of the Sackville family and was directly linked with the manor of Bexhill for some 300 years. The next year Thomas was created Baron Buckhurst, taking his title from the old family estate, and he was raised to the earldom of Dorset in the first year of James I's reign.

Thomas's son Robert, the 2nd Earl, founded by his will the well-known Sackville College at East Grinstead for 21 poor men and 10 poor unmarried women, and this was built by his son Richard, the 3rd Earl, with material taken from Old Buckhurst which had been abandoned in favour of the more convenient mansion

of Knole. Richard was succeeded in the title by his brother Edward who suffered for his support of the Royalist cause in the Civil War. Edward's son, the 5th Earl, married the daughter and heiress of Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, and after the death of her husband she married Henry Powle, Master of the Rolls, who is recorded as having held the courts of the manor of Bexhill. These courts were also held by her younger son Richard in the absence of his elder brother Charles who succeeded as the 6th Earl, and was a notable patron of the arts in the Restoration period, enjoying the friendship of Dryden and other eminent literary men.

The 7th Earl of Dorset, who succeeded his father, was the emissary to Hanover to announce the death of Queen Anne and the succession of George, the Elector of Hanover, to the throne of England. He was created Duke of Dorset and held the offices of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. He bequeathed the manor of Bexhill to his third and favourite son Lord George Sackville (who achieved some notoriety at the Battle of Minden by disobeying orders) for life, with reversion to the latter's nephew who succeeded as the 3rd Duke of Dorset. This holder of the title was the last English ambassador to the Royal Court of France before the Revolution, and on the domestic scene a member of the committee which compiled the rules for the Marylebone Cricket Club. His son, the 4th Duke, succeeded to the title in infancy but was killed in a hunting accident in Ireland in 1815 shortly after his 21st birthday. After this the dukedom passed to a cousin, son of the man who had disobeyed orders at Minden, and when he died unmarried in 1843 the Dorset titles became extinct.

Under the will of the 3rd Duke, however, the Sackville estates of Buckhurst, Knole and Bexhill had passed to his two daughters as co-heiresses. The elder, Mary, married first the Earl of Plymouth, and after his death Earl Amherst, the distinguished diplomat who conducted a famous embassy to the Emperor of China. When Mary died in 1864 the surviving sister Elizabeth, who had already received the Buckhurst estate, became the sole owner of the Sackville lands. She married the 5th Earl De La Warr, and it was through this marriage that the manor of Bexhill, along with the Buckhurst estate, passed to the De La Warr family and so remains to this day. The marriage, however, led to the separation of Bexhill from the Knole interests which were inherited by a younger son of Lord and Lady De La Warr, whereas Buckhurst and Bexhill descended with the title.

The De La Warr family which thus acquired the manor of Bexhill by marriage, came from the west Midlands and had been ennobled in 1299 when Edward I conferred a barony on Roger La Warr. The 2nd baron was with the Black Prince at Crecy, and it was to the 3rd baron and Sir John Pelham, a member of the well-known Sussex family, that King John of France surrendered at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356. His son, the 4th baron, also distinguished himself in the French wars, but the latter's brother who succeeded as the 5th baron was in Holy Orders and rector of the church in Manchester. When he died in 1426 the barony passed to

his half-sister's son Reginald, 3rd Baron West. This half-sister was the daughter of the 3rd Baron La Warr by a second marriage and she married in 1490 Thomas, 1st Baron West.

The Wests were also an ancient family and valiant in the service of the Crown. Sir Thomas West, father of the 1st baron, had fought at Crecy. He brought the Cantelupe name (afterwards the courtesy title of the eldest sons of the Earls De La Warr) to the family by marrying the daughter of Sir John Cantelupe of Hempston Cantelupe in Devonshire. The 2nd Baron West accompanied Henry V in the French wars. With the inheritance of the two baronies by Reginald who became the 6th Baron La Warr as well as 3rd Baron West, and the summoning to Parliament of his son as the 7th Baron De La Warr (the 'De' being added at this time) the barony of West was thenceforward merged in that of De La Warr, with West remaining as the family name until the 19th century.

In Edward VI's reign the 9th baron, having no direct male descendant, adopted a nephew as his heir, but this young man, impatient for his inheritance, prepared to poison his uncle, with the result that he was disinherited by Parliament, and when the 9th baron died in 1554 the baronies of De La Warr and West fell into abeyance. Eighteen years later in 1572, when the nephew had redeemed his character by service in the French wars, he was made the 1st Baron De La Warr in a new creation. His grandson, the 3rd baron, was appointed Governor and Captain-General of the colony of Virginia in 1610 and died there in 1618. It is after him that the State of Delaware, one of the 13 founder-members of the United States of America, is named. The 7th baron, a general in the Army and who also saw service in the New World as Governor of New York, was in 1737 created Viscount Cantelupe and Earl De La Warr.

The 5th Earl, with whom Bexhill's link with the De La Warr family begins, succeeded to the title at the age of four in 1795, and in 1813 married Lady Elizabeth Sackville who had, as already described, inherited the Buckhurst and Bexhill estates. The Earl, who was for a short time Lord Chamberlain, assumed in 1843 (the year in which the last Duke of Dorset died) the surname of Sackville before that of West, and under the Sign Manual the arms of the Sackvilles quarterly with those of West. The eldest son of the 5th Earl and Lady Elizabeth, who was an officer in the Grenadier Guards, died unmarried in 1850, and when the 5th Earl died in 1869 he was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, Charles Richard, a major-general who had distinguished himself in the Crimean War. This 6th Earl died in 1873 and was succeeded by his brother, Reginald Windsor, who assumed by Royal Licence the surname of Sackville only in place of Sackville-West which his father had chosen in 1843.

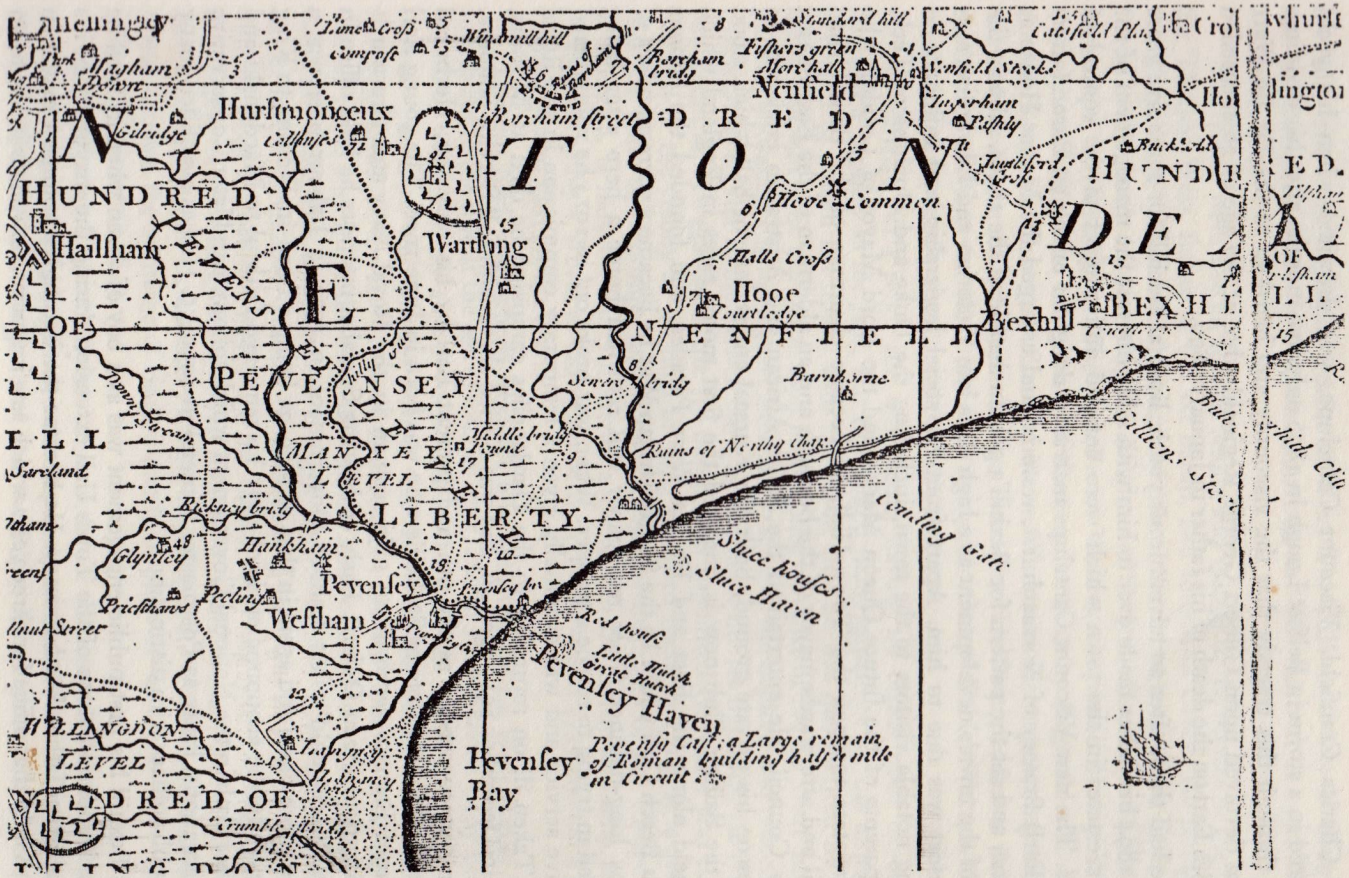
It was the 7th Earl who by his construction of the sea wall between Galley Hill and Sea Lane in 1883 began the development of the resort of Bexhill-on-Sea. He married in 1867 a daughter of the 1st Baron Lamington. Their eldest son,

Lionel Charles Cranfield, Viscount Cantelupe, was drowned when his yacht foundered in a storm in Belfast Lough in 1890 only five months after his wedding. It was through this tragedy that the viscounty and heirdom to the De La Warr honours devolved upon Gilbert George Reginald who, at the age of 26 succeeded as the 8th Earl on the death of his father in January 1896.

He had then, after an adventurous youth, lived at Bexhill for some five years and in 1894 his father made over to him with a life interest the management of the family's estates in the town which were entailed and subject to the control of trustees. The new Viscount Cantelupe married a daughter of the 1st Baron (afterwards Earl) Brassey of Normanhurst, restored and enlarged the Manor House as his home, and set the pattern for Bexhill's golden decade of the 1890s. Almost the whole of the town's development as a high class late Victorian and Edwardian seaside resort was due to him. Apart from his social leadership and influence in bringing notable visitors to the town, including the Duke and Duchess of Teck, —the parents of the future Queen Mary—and the Lord Mayor of London who came in state to open the Town Hall, he became chairman of the then Urban Council and afterwards mayor of the borough and an alderman of the East Sussex County Council. He entertained the South African and Australian cricketers in matches on his private ground, built the Kursaal entertainment hall which stood where the Sailing Club now is, inspired the first motor races in England which were held along the East and De La Warr Parades, and founded the famous Cooden Beach Golf Club. In the South African War he became a correspondent of the now long-defunct *Globe* newspaper and returned home a hero after being wounded in trying to rescue a trooper. When war broke out in 1914 he volunteered for active service and was eventually given a temporary commission in the Royal Navy. Taken ill on returning to the Dardanelles campaign he died at Messina, Sicily, in December 1915 aged 46, and was buried there with full Service honours.

He was succeeded as the 9th and present Earl by his only son, Herbrand Edward Dundonald Brassey Sackville who was born in June 1900. The young Earl went from Eton to serve as an able seaman in the Royal Navy and afterwards studied agriculture at Oxford. Early embracing Socialist interests he held office in Ramsay MacDonald's first Labour Government in 1923 (a Labour peer was a rarity in those days) and again in that of 1929–31 being a Lord-in-Waiting to King George V. In the economic crisis of 1931 he remained faithful to Macdonald and held office both in the National Government which followed and later Conservative Administrations, lastly as Postmaster General in 1951–55. He has also filled many other public offices with distinction.

At Bexhill his first public engagement was as a boy of seven when in 1908 he laid the foundation stone of the Town Hall extension during the mayoralty of his maternal grandfather Lord Brassey. He became the borough's youngest mayor in 1932 and held that office for three years which saw important advances in the town



III.—An enlarged section of Budgen's map of Sussex engraved in 1724. The ruins of Northeye Chapel are marked, also Barnhorn, 'Couding' Gate and the Sluice Haven and Sluice House, now the Star Inn at Normans Bay. A lagoon at Cooden is also shown, fed by streams from the western slopes of Bexhill.

including the building of the De La Warr Pavilion, of which he was the inspiration, and the opening of Bexhill Hospital. In 1920 he married Diana Leigh who died in 1966, and secondly, in 1968 the Countess Kilmuir, widow of the Lord Chancellor who was better known in public life as Sir David Maxwell Fyfe. After the second world war the Earl made over the management of the family's Bexhill estates to his son and heir William Herbrand, Lord Buckhurst, who was born in 1921.

The original barony of Buckhurst had become extinct with the death of the last Duke of Dorset in 1843. In 1864 it was revived in favour of the Countess De La Warr, the daughter of the 3rd Duke of Dorset who had inherited the Buckhurst estates which, with her marriage passed into the De La Warr family. Thereafter the barony was reserved to younger sons, with the proviso that 'upon any Baron Buckhurst succeeding to the earldom of De La Warr, the barony should devolve upon the heir next entitled to succeed if the person being so succeeded should die without male issue'. When the Baroness Buckhurst, Countess De La Warr, died in 1870 her second son had already succeeded his father as 6th Earl (the eldest having predeceased his parents) and the barony of Buckhurst passed to the third son, Reginald Windsor. When he succeeded as 7th Earl, as already recounted, his eldest son (and after the latter's death the second son), took the courtesy title of Viscount Cantelupe. A claim to the Buckhurst barony was made by a younger son of the 5th Earl, but this was rejected by the House of Lords in 1876, since when the barony has been merged with the earldom of De La Warr, and the present heir of the 9th Earl is known as Lord Buckhurst.

The Brassey family association with Bexhill derived from the purchase of the old Buckholt manor and the marriage of Muriel, daughter of the 1st Baron (afterwards Earl) Brassey to Viscount Cantelupe who became the 8th Earl De La Warr. The Brassey fortune was founded by the father of the 1st Baron, Thomas Brassey, the famous railway contractor. The son, the eldest of four, and who lived at Beauport Park, was elected as one of the two Members of Parliament which the borough of Hastings then returned. In the 1860s he acquired from Sir Peregrine Ackland the estate in the parish of Catsfield where in the latter part of the decade he built in French-chateau style the great mansion of Normanhurst Court.

Under the Redistribution of Seats Act in 1885 Hastings was deprived of one of its Members, and in the general election that followed Brassey was defeated. In 1886, however, he was raised to a barony and was created an earl in King George V's Coronation Honours of 1911, in which year he opened the Colonnade at Bexhill, built to commemorate the Coronation. He had a distinguished public career, was Secretary and Civil Lord of the Admiralty and Governor of Victoria. His wife's accounts of their voyages in the yacht *Sunbeam*, aboard which she died off Port Darwin, Australia, and was buried at sea, were popular publications in their day, especially notable for a close observation of Natural History and a keen sense of narrative. In 1906 Lord Brassey gave to Bexhill the borough's handsome gold

mayoral chain of office and the next year he was made the first honorary freeman of the borough and one hour later elected mayor. During his year of office he was also honoured with the appointment of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports and his flag was flown from the Town Hall when the extension to the original building, including the present Council Chamber, was opened in 1908.

Lord Brassey's son, the Hon. Thomas Allnutt Brassey, who followed his father in the mayoralty of Bexhill, had been for a short time prospective Conservative candidate for the Rye Parliamentary division, a break with the family's Liberal tradition, but he was unable to follow the party line sufficiently to enable him to pursue his candidature. When his father was raised to the earldom he himself took the courtesy title of Viscount Hythe. He succeeded as the 2nd Earl in 1918 but died the following year after being knocked down by a taxicab in London, and the title became extinct. (The present barony of Brassey is a separate creation deriving from a younger brother of the 1st Earl.) His widow, Lady Idina, daughter of the 3rd Marquess of Abergavenny and a popular figure in Bexhill before the first world war, resided for many years at Park Gates, Catsfield, now a hotel. She was a personal friend of Queen Mary, a founder-member of the Wimbledon lawn tennis championships which she attended regularly for many years, and was president of the Royal East Sussex Hospital from 1919 until it was nationalised in 1948.

Of the other daughters of the 1st Earl Brassey, Lady Marie Adelaide married Mr. Freeman Freeman-Thomas, Member of Parliament for Hastings from 1900 to 1906, and afterwards the 1st Marquess of Willingdon, Governor-General of Canada, Governor of Madras, and Viceroy of India. Lady Mabelle married Mr. C. A. Egerton, of Mountfield Court, and their son, Commander H. S. Egerton, was well known for his public work in Sussex for many years until his death in 1969. Lady Mabelle, a founder in 1902 of the Sussex County Nursing Association, was awarded the G.B.E. in 1918 for her welfare work for the troops at Rouen during the first world war.

After the death of the 2nd Earl Brassey the family estate was broken up and the mansion of Normanhurst Court became the home of St. Hilary's Girls School which moved from Hastings Road at Bexhill. Badly damaged during military occupation during the second world war the house was demolished in 1951.

THE MANOR HOUSE

The separation of the manor of Bexhill from the See of Chichester in 1561 marked the end of the distinction which the parish had enjoyed as the eastern seat of the bishops for more than 400 years. The Sackville family, with the magnificence of Knole, used the Manor House but rarely, though Elizabethan and Stuart period features to which 19th century writers refer show that it was not neglected. Two communicating rooms added to the east side of the house became known as the Dorset wing. The oldest part, a survival of the ecclesiastical residence, retained

several 13th-century arches and window spaces. The proceedings of the manorial courts show that the lords of the manor were careful of their duties to Bexhill, and in the 18th century, when wildfowling became popular among the gentry, the house was used by the Dukes of Dorset as a shooting lodge when they came to enjoy that sport over the marshes where the modern town now spreads. The 19th century saw the Manor House occupied by several local families of whom the most important were the Brooks who acted as bailiffs for the Manor and were substantial farmers in the parish, though the title of 'Squire' which they were accorded was a purely local courtesy. Towards the end of the century, when Mr. A. S. Brook moved to The Grange at the top of Upper Sea Road, the Manor House deteriorated and was at one time described as a 'crumbling ruin'.

From this sad state it was rescued by the enthusiasm and lavish expenditure of Viscount Cantelupe who restored and enlarged the house and greatly improved the estate as a home for himself and his bride, Lady Muriel Brassey, whom he married in 1891. The alterations were made in good taste, the additions harmonised with the old building, and the result gave Bexhill a focal point of its golden 1890s. House-warming balls in 1892 saw the entertainment of the 'county' on the first evening and of local residents the next, and thereafter the decade was marked by the aristocratic week-end parties in vogue at the time. That part of the house which had anciently been the chapel became the kitchen and servants' hall; the Dorset rooms were Lord Cantelupe's study and bedroom. All the outbuildings, linked by telephone six years before the National Telephone Company began a public service in the town, were in keeping with the architectural style of the house, and the cattle and fattening shed of Squire Brook's day was transformed into a pavilion, with a tennis lawn laid over what had been the cowyard. This pavilion, now known as The Barn, has been retained amid the demolition of the Manor House of which only a few portions of the ancient structure have been preserved. On the lower part of the estate, now covered by Manor and Magdalen Roads, a cricket ground was laid out and it was here that the South African team played in 1894 and the Australian Test cricketers two years later, the most famous match in local history. The gardens provided a charming setting for concerts and fetes illuminated at night by hundreds of fairy lights.

These splendid days ended when Lady De La Warr was granted a divorce in 1902, and the next year the Manor House was leased to Mr. August Neven Du Mont, son of a Cologne newspaper proprietor and who had first visited Bexhill because of its reputation as a health resort, owing to the illness of his son. An artist and sportsman (his 'Crucifixion' hangs in St. Mary Magdalene's Church), he was a popular Master of the East Sussex Hunt and his death at the age of 42 in 1909 was widely regretted. His widow remained in occupation of the house until the family's German connections caused their departure with the imminence of the first world war, but the intervening years saw the entertainment of many dis-

tinguished visitors, including dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church, notably for the consecration of St. Mary Magdalene Church in 1913; Captain R. F. Scott, who came just before setting out on his last Antarctic expedition; and in the fateful month of July 1914 two sisters of the Emperor William II of Germany. Mrs. Neven Du Mont had founded a German boys school at Whindown (now St. Francis Girls School) and one of the pupils was a nephew of the Kaiser. Additions to the Manor House were made during those years and The Barn was turned into a ballroom with a stage where amateur theatricals were performed after the fashion of those days, assisted by the famous actor Sir Charles Wyndham who was a friend of the Du Mont family and frequent visitor to the Manor House.

After the first world war the estate was purchased by Sir Robert Leicester Harmsworth, a younger brother of Lord Northcliffe, founder of the *Daily Mail* and himself a considerable figure in the newspaper and publishing world for many years. The Harmsworth family interest in Bexhill began when Lord Northcliffe (then Alfred Harmsworth) competed in the first motor races held in 1902 between Galley Hill and the De La Warr Parade. Sir Leicester, as he was known, was Liberal Member of Parliament for Caithness, and then Caithness and Sutherland, from 1900 to 1922, being created a baronet in 1918. He acquired a notable library, which was housed in The Barn at the Manor House, and gave a number of historic documents to the governments of Canada and Australia, as well as to institutions in this country. He took little part in the affairs of Bexhill, but was generous in allowing the use of the Manor House gardens for social and charitable occasions.

After his death in 1937 his widow continued to reside at the Manor House which also remained the home of her eldest son Alfred who inherited the baronetcy. A semi-invalid as a result of war wounds while serving with the Gloucestershire Regiment in France in 1916, he died in 1962. Lady Harmsworth died the following year at the age of 95, after which the Manor Estate was offered for sale and eventually bought by the Corporation for £22,000. Much controversy ensued over possible uses for the house, leading to the formation of an Old Town Preservation Society, but in 1968 the house and some of the outbuildings, including South Lodge which faced High Street were demolished, leaving only the ancient portions of the house to form a centre for ornamental public gardens. So passed, after an occupation of the site for some 900 years, the old Manor House of Bexhill, easily the oldest building in the town after St. Peter's Church.

COURT LEET AND COURT BARON

With its passage into the Sackville family the administration of the Manor of Bexhill followed the pattern which had existed in England from Saxon times, and there are preserved in the East Sussex county archives the beautifully kept records of the Court Leet of the Hundred of Bexhill and of the Court Baron of the Manor. Such courts were the origins of our democratic local government and first pro-

moted the principle of voluntary public service. Professor G. M. Trevelyan in his 'History of England' notes that they promoted stability, certainty and law, defined the services owed and the limits of the power of the Lord of the Manor, exercised through his bailiff or steward: 'The peasantry nominally, and to some extent actually, were judges of the business of the court and in every village there were various humble offices which the common people filled, either by election or rotation and created the habits of self-government'. In the reign of Elizabeth I the Rev. William Harrison recalled that the wage-earning class in villages were 'commonly made churchwardens, sidesmen, aleconners, constables, and many times enjoy the name of headboroughs'.

The Court Leet was also known as the View of Frankpledge, which was the medieval system of mutual responsibility to keep the peace in 'tithings' of ten householders. As the Court Leet, it was in theory a royal court with the lord of the manor as delegate of the King and he or his steward presided over the proceedings. In time criminal jurisdiction increasingly passed to justices of the peace, who were first so defined by Act of Parliament in 1361, and minor civil proceedings became co-ordinated under the County Courts Act of 1846, but many manorial courts were long maintained because of the profit that accrued from the proceedings.

At Bexhill there were three headboroughs and the property of the manor was divided into the East- Middle- and Westboroughs, the heads of which appeared before the court with their lists of resiants, that is the tithings of ten householders who were neighbours and bound over for each others' peaceable behaviour. The borough divisions facilitated control of the estates, for a map of 1799, described as one of the 'plans and surveys of the estates in the County of Sussex belonging to His Grace the Duke of Dorset,' shows four Bexhill properties, namely those of Court Lodge (which was later re-named the Manor House and estate by the 8th Earl De La Warr), the Chintings estate which lay west of Sea Lane, the extensive Cooden (then spelt Cooding) farmlands, and a small parcel of ground in the vicinity of Pear Tree Lane and Turkey Road named Highwoods. These four estates totalled more than 1,100 acres. The Court Leet proceedings, which were assisted by a jury duly sworn, made nominations for the office of constable, and from these two were chosen by the steward presiding over the court and legally sworn-in. On one occasion when one of those chosen was not present the court record states that 'a note is sent to Edward Noakes requiring him to be sworn into his office'. The three headboroughs were similarly nominated and those chosen by the steward sworn into office.

The last Court Leet proceedings recorded are those of July 1872 held on behalf of the Right Honourable Charles Richard Earl De La Warr, 'Lord of the said Hundred', but in theory they may, like the Court Baron, still be held when applicable to the lordship of a manor.

Through the court baron the manor administered the tenancies held by favour

of the lord, and at Bexhill the ancient custom of borough-English prevailed, namely the inheritance by the youngest son (or youngest brother if there were no issue), a procedure abolished by Act of Parliament in 1925. The tenancies were largely customary, that is originally under customs or duties of various kinds but later by the custom of the manor, and copyhold which was by copy of the court roll. Copyhold tenure, under which all tenancies were returned to the lord of the manor on a holder's death and were re-granted by the Court Baron, were abolished under the Law of Property Act, 1922, which became effective on January 1, 1926.

A number of medieval customs survived until the later years of the court, including that of Heriot which had been a feudal service, originally military but afterwards the rendering of the best live beast or dead chattel of a deceased tenant due by legal custom to the lord of the manor. The term 'Homage' also long prevailed, a word which originally meant a body of persons owing allegiance or tenants attending a manorial court, but in practice three were chosen at Bexhill as the Homage and reported tenancy surrenders. It would seem that in the absence of the lord of the manor or his steward, they acted as a committee in the local administration. How carefully this duty was carried out, and how much respect there was for property may be judged from proceedings at the beginning of the 19th century when the Homage, endorsed by the Court Baron, ensured an orphan girl's succession to her widowed mother's tenancy and appointed guardians until she should become of age. An instance of the care with which the amenities and value of the manor were preserved, is that when a new tenant was admitted to the holding of Broadoak early in the 19th century it was necessary for the lord of the manor, through the Court Baron, to grant him a licence to fell 50 oak trees. Among later proceedings of the court were conveyances of land for the coast railway in the 1840's and for the Bexhill West to Crowhurst branch line at the turn of the century.

In the latter part of the last century the title of Court Baron was superseded by that of the Manor Court, the final meeting of which was held on the last day of 1925 before the Law of Property Act came into effect the next day and enfranchised copyhold tenure. The proceedings on that occasion involved land at Sidley including the old forge and wheelwright's shop. As a result of the 1922 Act, and a further Law of Property Act in 1925, manorial rights became restricted mostly to those of a mineral and sporting nature.

Recorded in the earlier years in Latin, the records show interesting changes in the lordship of the manor. In 1804 the Court Baron is described as that of the 'Most Noble Arabella Diana, Duchess of Dorset, the testamentary guardian lawfully appointed of her only son, the Most Noble George John Frederick, Duke of Dorset, an infant, and as such Lady of the said Manor'. (This was the 4th Duke who was killed in a hunting accident at the age of 21.) Some 40 years later the Lord of the Hundred and Manor was William Pitt, Earl Amherst, who had married

Mary, a daughter of the 3rd Duke and after his death she is described as the Dowager Countess Amherst, Lady of the Manor. When she died the Bexhill estates passed in their entirety to her sister and co-heiress, Elizabeth, who had married the 5th Earl De La Warr, and in 1865 the manorial proceedings were held by his authority. In more recent years, after the death of the 8th Earl De La Warr in 1915, the manorial court was held on behalf of Muriel Agnes, Countess De La Warr, 'Lady of the said Manor' until 1921 when the 9th Earl became of age.

CHAPTER FOUR

Village to Resort

THE SETTLEMENT OF the manor of Bexhill on the Sackville family in the 16th century was followed by a rural peace that lasted almost undisturbed for more than 200 years. Few references of importance occur during that time. During the first lordship, that of Thomas Sackville, then Baron Buckhurst, a school was established in the Chantry Chapel at St. Peter's Church by the Rector, Thomas Pye, but how long it existed we do not know. It was an exception for the parish to 'make news' as it did in 1729 when a freak storm caused such destruction as to be the subject of a London pamphlet. The village also shared in the excitement of the wreck at Bulverhythe in 1748 of the Dutch East Indiaman *Amsterdam,* from which much valuable cargo was saved. Early in the next century poor people from Bexhill were still digging in the sand-covered hull.

The routine of local life, dominated by the Church, the manor, the parish vestry and the agricultural year was more permanently upset by the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars which saw the building of 12 Martello towers along the foreshore and the infantry depot of the King's German Legion, whose barracks spread from Old Town to where London Road now runs to Sidley. Bexhill was never quite the same again; it had been discovered. Visitors in the wake of military and other official personages realised the attractions of the Sussex countryside, with the proximity of the sea which had been made respectable by King George III's visits to Weymouth and his eldest son's patronage of Brighton. It was a natural consequence that in 1813, when a dwelling house 'suitable for the reception of a family of respectability' was advertised in the *Star* newspaper, Bexhill, then having some 1,600 inhabitants, should be described as 'one of the most healthy and pleasant situations on the coast of Sussex and well adapted for sea bathing, for which purpose it is occasionally resorted to'.

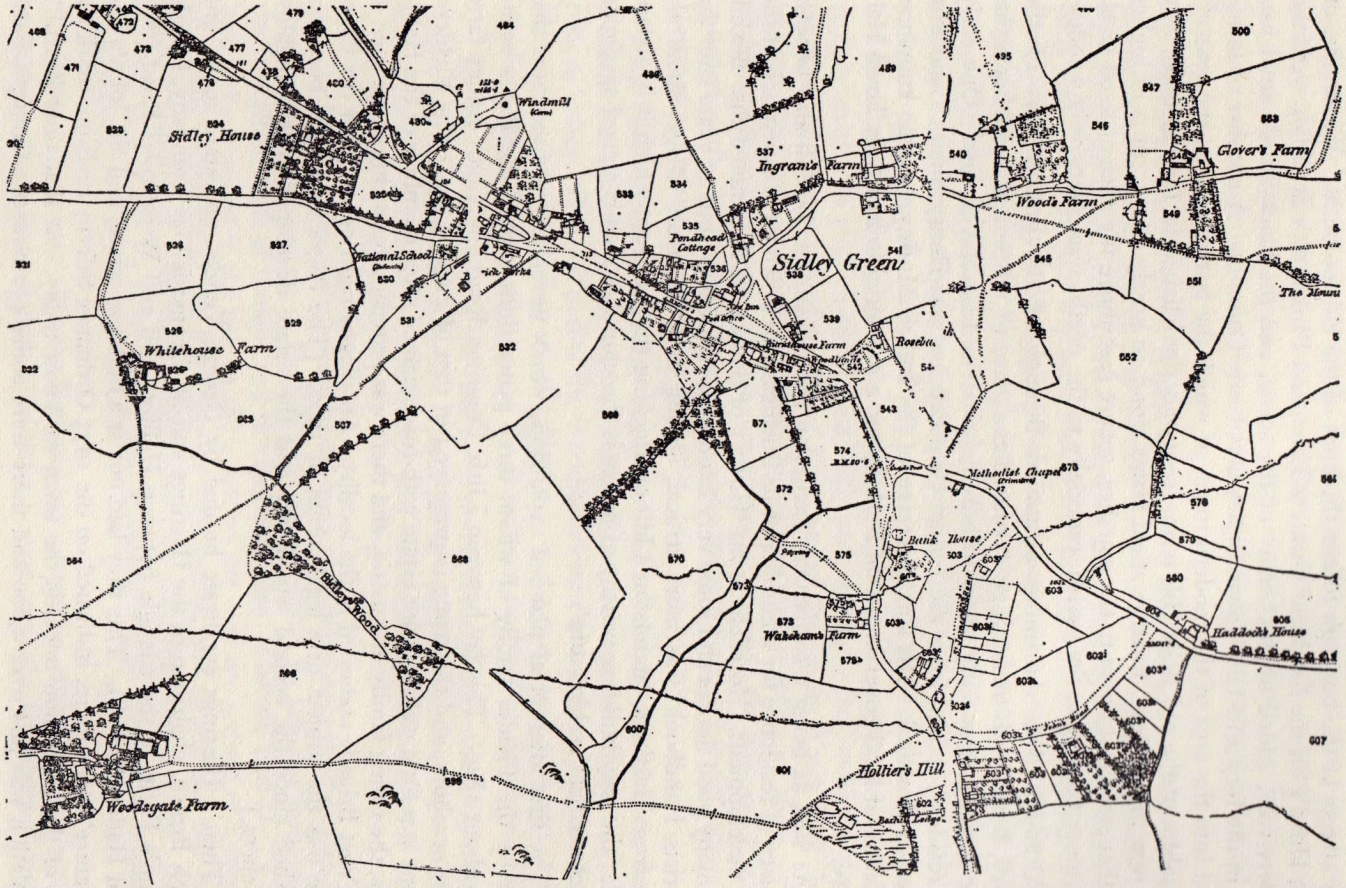
A few years later Diplock's 'Guide to Hastings' mentioned Bexhill 'about six miles to the west' as a 'most delightful morning ride along the coast', and added: 'There is a good and convenient inn with every accommodation calculated for

the reception of strangers who, in summer, are frequently induced to visit this rural spot. Very recently a few lodging houses, a circulating library and a small theatre have been erected, and Mr. Brook, a respectable resident, keeps a most excellent pack of hounds which in the winter and sporting seasons affords recreation and amusement'. (The inn was, of course, the 'Bell', the theatre also became its assembly room, and Mr. John Brook resided at the Manor House, then known as Court Lodge.) In the town's first local guide book, 'A Short Account of the History and Present Condition of Bexhill in Sussex', published in 1884, Dr. Wills wrote that after the Napoleonic wars Bexhill 'settled down again to its farming and smuggling; the drill ground was ploughed up, the barracks turned into cottages, and the mess and billiard rooms into an infant school and a carpenter's workshop. Then came the railway engine. Of the Martello towers, some were washed away by encroachment of the sea, some experimentally knocked down by the first breech-loading guns, and one furnished material for the Church of St. Mark at Little Common; and so, at last, with its sea wall and what-not of modern improvements, the Bexelei of Doomsday became the Bexhill of today'.

This change, nevertheless, was considerably delayed and the picture of the village meanwhile conjured up is a very agreeable one, of which a few reminders remain even now. As late as 1870 M. A. Lower could write in his 'A Compendious History of Sussex': 'This large and agreeable parish on the English Channel has a picturesque village, seated on an agreeable eminence commanding extensive views both of sea and land; as yet it is almost the only really available site on the Sussex coast that has not been turned into a "watering-place", for which its natural beauty and healthful climate so eminently qualify it'. Dr. Wills himself wrote: 'From its close proximity to St. Leonards and Hastings, Bexhill has been widely known as a picturesque tiny village crowded in between the venerable church and ancient manor, nestling among trees and looking down across breezy slopes on the white coastguard station and the open Channel. Between it and St. Leonards there were scarce half-a-dozen houses, and the road still had its high hedges full of brambles and wild flowers all the way into the village, and a very pleasant-looking old village it must have been'.

The old parish roads remained as they had been for generations and as most of them continued for years to come; except for their macadam surfaces a few are not greatly changed even today, and their old names have been happily preserved: Freezeland Lane, Gunters Lane, Barnhorn Road, Picknell Green Road, St. Mary's Lane, Sandhurst Lane, Collington Lane, Broadoak Lane, Down Road, Hastings Road, West Down Road, Ellerslie Lane, Barrack Road, High Street and Church Street: these were all that existed to become the responsibility of Bexhill's new Local Board in 1884. Footpaths abounded, connecting otherwise isolated farms with the separated Bexhill, Little Common and Sidley communities—which retain their individualities to this day—and affording pleasant ways and recreation.

IV.—A reproduction from part of the Ordnance Survey of the parish of Bexhill dated 1873, showing the open land where the modern resort now spreads.



V.—The northern part of the parish of Bexhill, including Sidley: A reproduction from the Ordnance Survey of 1873 when the village was beginning to expand.

Many streets of the borough follow the lines of the old footpaths. Windmills, of which Hoad's on the height of Gunters Lane, and Pankhurst's at Sidley were the last survivors, added to the beauty of the scene, and the blacksmith's anvil was busy in the forges of Old Town, Sidley and Little Common. A number of farms spread into the area of the modern town, of which the last remnants, the granary and stables of the old Belle Hill farm, were only demolished in 1970 to make way for a new fire station. Further afield farms stood on nearly all the spurs of higher land that stretched down to the marshes, secure just above the ancient flood level. Even more than now, the parish, especially to the north, was extensively wooded.

Although thus remaining unspoiled throughout the greater part of the century, Bexhill was increasingly favoured as a place of retirement by old servants of the Empire, especially those with India and Far East associations. One early such resident, retired from the Indian Civil Service, was Henry Snaith Lane who resided at Broadoak. His son, a veteran of the Indian Mutiny, became known as the 'father of local government' in Bexhill, and a memorial to him is in Town Hall Square.

As well as being a convenient excursion from Hastings, Bexhill also became the place of residence for a number of its businessmen to whom is due much of the early development. Horsfield in his 'History of Sussex' in 1835 noted that Bexhill had 'many good houses and some very handsome residences', but 20 years later the 'Tourists Handbook' was more critical, stating that the small village, about six miles from Hastings, 'stands on a hill overlooking the sea from which it is distant a mile; the only building worthy of notice is the church which is a good specimen of ecclesiastical architecture'.

The first attempt at planned expansion, which never materialised, was that made by the Fielder family of whom three generations owned the Pages estate from about 1840. This lay between Little Common Road and Court Lodge farm on the seashore, and the name is preserved in that of Pages Lane. The Fielders' scheme was for a well laid-out estate with roads named after members of the Habsburgs, the ruling family of Austria, and there was provision for a church for men of the Coast Brigade stationed in the locality. An alleged right of way over the Pages estate was the subject of a legal action in 1900. (The Pages house has been demolished since the second world war and the estate developed with bungalow residences.)

Then a Hastings syndicate headed by George Veness, an estate agent, and Joseph Brown, chairman of the Hastings and St. Leonards Gas Company, bought Cramp's Farm in the triangle between Holliers Hill and Wrestwood Road (then called Haddocks Hill). This they laid out as a building estate, and St. John's and St. James' roads there, indicated on the 1873 Ordnance Survey revision, mark the start of the expansion towards the town we know today. At that time Bexhill's population was just over 2,000 and there were some 450 houses. Cramp's Farm

has an older niche in history for the local smugglers retreated there in a notorious battle with the Preventive force on Sidley Green in 1828. Apart from the old parish roads taken over from the Hastings Highways Board, St. John's and St. James' roads were the first to be adopted as public highways by the Bexhill Local Board.

In 1873 a Parliamentary return showed that after the De La Warr family the largest landowner in Bexhill was Samuel Scrivens who lived at 'Millfield', Belle Hill (originally called Belly Hill), a house now converted into flats. It was formerly known as 'The Firs' and was acquired by Mr. Scrivens through marriage into the Bexhill landed family of Moorman whose residence is noted in Horsfield's 'History of Sussex' in 1835. Mr. Scrivens' disposal of farmland between Belle Hill and where Town Hall Square now is led to the building in the early 1880s of the London Road (originally Station Road) shopping area and residential streets in the vicinity. This was the first step in the urban spread towards the railway which had been opened in 1846, and the making of these roads, leading to the Sackville Arch—which was modernised from a cattle arch in 1892—facilitated the development of the town south of the line. From across the future Town Hall Square, Station Road was prolonged to meet the railway station access on the north side of the line from Sea Lane, where a narrow bridge spanned the railway. It was not widened until 1905 when preparations were made for the tramway service from Hastings to Cooden, opened the next year.

By 1880 building had also begun on the hillside of the Honies, between Holliers Hill and the valley where London Road, not completed until 1928, now runs to Sidley. This was part of the Woodsgate estate of Lambert Walker who built four almshouses—dwellings which still stand—and a club room now part of Sidley Working Men's Club. Later he was the munificent donor of St. Stephen's Church.

In 1881 the opening of the Old Town home of the Metropolitan Convalescent Institution (nationalised under the Health Act of 1948) led to recognition of Bexhill as a health resort, and many convalescent and residential homes followed in its wake before the end of the century.

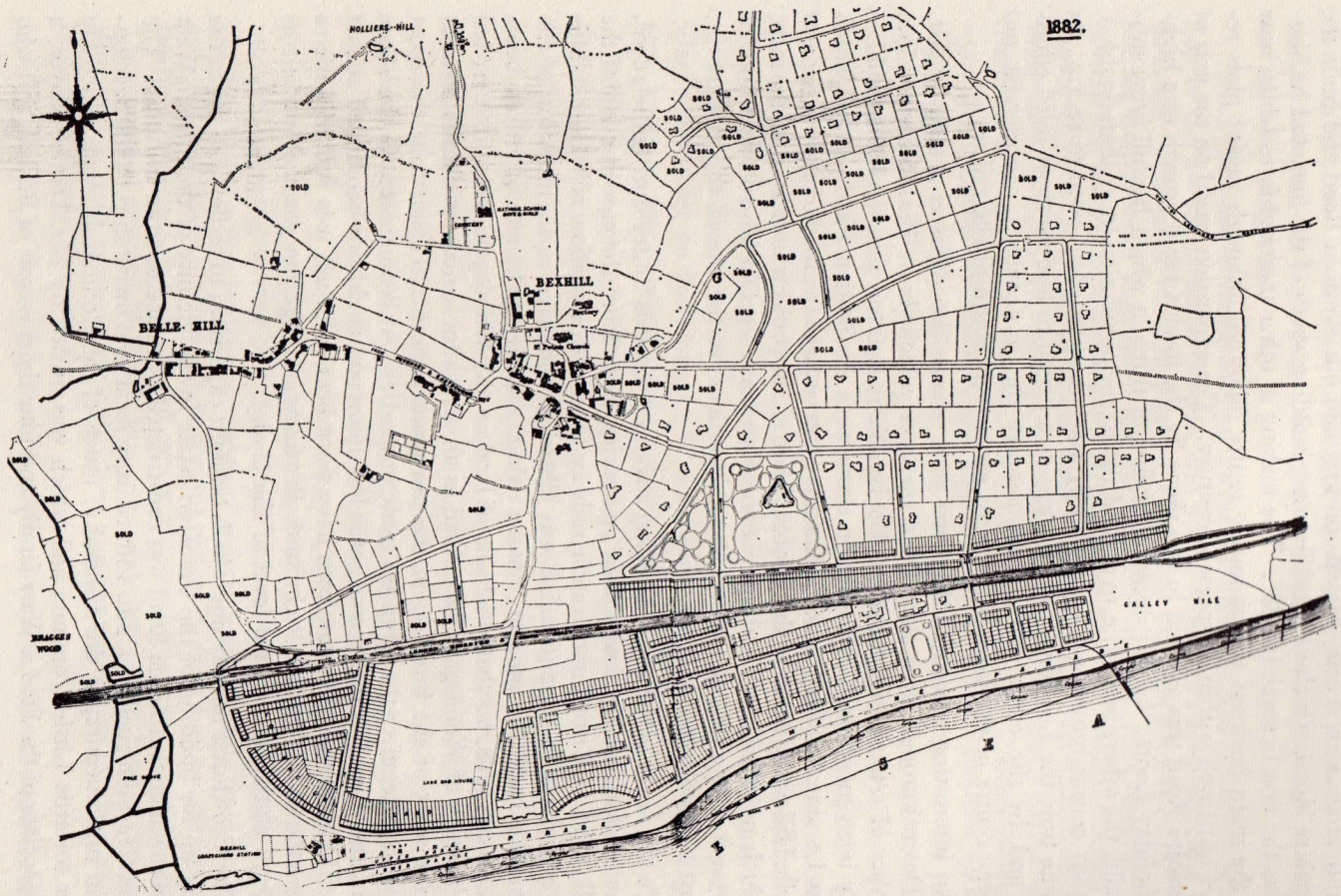
During these years also, many landowners were developing their estates, partly because of the depression in English agriculture caused by the new imports from the vast wheatlands of Canada and the United States. The 7th Earl De La Warr, who had succeeded to the title in 1873, saw on the west the growth of Eastbourne under the patronage of the 8th Duke of Devonshire, and to the east the Radnor family's building at Folkestone which gave that town the famous Leas. In 1880 the first sale of De La Warr estate land at Bexhill led to residential building in Hastings Road.

Two years later in 1882 the Earl and his co-trustees of the De La Warr estate at Bexhill, which was entailed, obtained a licence from the Chancery Division of

the High Court under the Settled Estates Act of 1877, to build a sea wall and esplanade. To carry out this work between Galley Hill and Sea Lane, embanking the marshy ground behind, they engaged Mr. John Webb, a South London builder and contractor, who surveyed the site the same year and undertook the contract for £34,000. There were then no Bexhill newspapers to record such a momentous undertaking, but the magazine of St. Peter's Church noted under the date March 13, 1883: 'Today Mr. Webb, the contractor, made a beginning not far from the Marine cottages, and already there may be traced the first tokens of the new roadway which is to form the frontage of the future Bexhill-on-Sea'. The church magazine, apart from Lord De La Warr's choice of site, makes it clear that the eastern side of the parish was intended to be the centre of the new town. At an early stage there were ambitious plans for the layout of roads and residential building, and the estate began a sewerage system with an outfall where the present municipal disintegrator station is at the end of the East Parade. So much had this progressed that in 1886, when the Local Board completed the first main sewer for the older part of the town, it contracted with Lord De La Warr to link the pipe to the estate outfall, and this remains the basis of the borough's sewerage system today.

The De La Warr estate reserved for its own development that part of the parish east of Sea Lane and south of Hastings Road, but unfortunately progress did not match expectations, partly because of the proximity of the gas works which were opened in 1887, and also because of the general urban tendency for westward expansion. Building remained spasmodic until the later 1890s when Mr. George H. Gray, agent to the De La Warr estate for 30 years, laid out Dorset, Magdalen and Manor roads, obliterating the cricket field where the 8th Earl De La Warr's XI had played the Australians. Mr. Gray, who became a partner in the firm of Riches and Gray, estate agents, was one of the first professional men to open an office in the new town south of the railway. He was the architect for St. George's Presbyterian Church and several other local buildings. One of his first duties as mayor in 1918 was to proclaim the Armistice on November 11. The early expectations of an eastward expansion may be judged from a proposal even in the late 1890s for a new railway station at the end of Cantelupe Road with a broad approach from the sea front, and later the building of the Presbyterian Church and the adjacent magistrates court and police station.

Meanwhile Mr. Webb, with remarkable foresight, had accepted in part-payment for his construction of the sea wall, land south of the railway and west of Sea Lane, which he developed energetically, and with much courage in difficult years, as the Egerton Park estate. He was one of the most remarkable men in the history of Bexhill, and in addition to building much of the town centre as it remains today, he laid out the first part of Egerton Park which was taken over by the then Urban Council at the turn of the century. He died an octogenarian in 1922. Using the



VI.—A plan of Bexhill as laid out for building in 1882 in the De La Warr Estate's original scheme for the development of the town. There were then only a few isolated buildings south of the railway line and open country to the east of the old Town.

Sackville arch as an access, Mr. Webb first laid out Western Road and built the Devonshire Hotel, which was the first new building south of the line, and he himself was the first licensee in 1886. The making of other thoroughfares which now form the main business and shopping centre followed, although vacant plots remained until well within the present century. The expansion based on the axis of Devonshire Road was assisted in the 1890s by the town's rapid growth as a high-class holiday resort. In this decade (the first of three in which Bexhill grew substantially, the others being the 1930s and 1960s) the population more than doubled. The 1891 census return was 5,602 and by 1901 the figure had risen to 12,213. At the same time the London Road business area began to lose its short-lived eminence, and by the early years of the century the professional, commercial and shopping centre of the town was almost exclusively south of the railway.

An interesting record of the town as it was in the 1880s is a map by Mr. John Downsborough, an architect and surveyor, which shows Bexhill divided into a number of estates. Of these the De La Warr, Egerton Park and Honies have already been mentioned. In addition there were the Station Fields estate, which was the London Road area; the Fairmount estate around the road of that name; and the Belle Hill estate north of that thoroughfare. Two projects indicated on the map, but which never came to fruition, were for a road from Old Town to the foot of the present Manor Road and ornamental gardens on the site of the modern St. Richard's school playing fields.

To the north of the town, building advanced towards Sidley during the 1890s, but the chief expansion, and with it prosperity, came from the construction of the Bexhill West to Crowhurst branch railway line, with a station at Sidley. This work, completed in 1902 (the line was closed in 1964) led to the building of the Pelham Hotel and the present 'Sussex' which stands on the site of an old beer-house. Westwards, a substantial sale of land on the Woodsgate estate in 1901 led to the making of Woodsgate Park Road as an access for a new residential area; at this time most of the building in the town was concentrated north of the coast railway because, after the large sea front properties had been erected in the 1890s the remaining land in that vicinity was low-lying and could not be utilised at that time. Although their surroundings have since been built up, it is still possible to see how the West Parade, Richmond, Brockley and Egerton roads stood out as causeways above the original level of the land.

The Crowhurst railway line which brought expansion to Sidley also led to the opening up for building of the Cranston estate in the vicinity of the former West Station to which Terminus Road was constructed as an access from the town. The name of Cranston goes back into 18th century local land ownership. This development in turn encouraged the disposal of much of the Collington estate which lay further towards Little Common and which was owned by Mr. Daniel Mayer, a close associate of the De La Warr family and four times mayor of Bexhill, and who

built on the site of the old Collington farmhouse the handsome Tudor-style residence known as Collington manor, demolished in the 1960s for development with smaller properties.

With the close of the Edwardian era the 8th Earl De La Warr turned his attention to the development of Cooden, the manor which had been acquired by the Sackville family after the Reformation. Although the men's home of the Metropolitan Convalescent Institution had been opened there in 1905, together with a railway halt for the new motor train service (it became the present Cooden Beach station 30 years later), and there had been a tramway route over fields from Bexhill since 1906, Cooden was still open country, and the only road access was the narrow lane from Little Common. While all the hopes for Cooden Beach estate were not immediately realised, the pleasant layout of the modern residential roads today is basically the pattern then envisaged, and a tribute to the planning of those days. The most far-sighted enterprise, however, was the construction of the famous Cooden Beach golf course, and the opening of the club in 1912 gave Bexhill, whose population was then some 15,000, added prestige in the sporting world and also as a residential resort by the sea. Equally important, it led to the making up of Cooden Drive along the tramway line, a work completed in 1914. In between the two world wars the development of South Cliff and adjacent roads stemmed directly from the axis of Cooden Drive and thus from Lord De La Warr's enterprise on the western side of the borough. Residential building in that area, however, was not completed until after the 1939–45 war.

A comprehensive scheme for borough development was prepared by the Town Council during the second world war, but under post-war legislation the East Sussex County Council became the Local Planning Authority, the Corporation of Bexhill receiving some delegated powers. After the lifting of restrictions on private building, local enterprise and expansion were such that land zoned for development was utilised before the Ministry of Town and Country Planning had approved the draft Town Map, and a further release of land for building was required to maintain the local industry and meet housing demands. In these years, reaching a climax of activity in the 1960s, when Bexhill's population rose to more than 30,000, Birk Dale, Hurchington, Bidwell, Pebsham and other areas were transformed, and Little Common and Sidley considerably altered to provide modern shopping centres for their larger communities. In general residential building was of a type to meet the needs of retired people, mostly from the London area who formed an increasingly important section in a town whose pleasant nature has been preserved by well laid out estates giving relatively low-density population. The planning concern to which this gave rise, because of land utilisation, was alleviated to some extent in the 1960s by a growing popularity for flats, of which a number of blocks were erected.

No account of Bexhill's growth would be complete without mention of muni-

VII.—A map of Bexhill dated 1887 by John Downsborough to show the estates being developed at that time, and a key to which is in the top left-hand corner.

cipal housing. Sixty-six houses were built under the Housing Act of 1919, called the 'Addison Scheme' from the then Minister of Health. Before the second world war further houses were built in London Road, Little Common and at Sidley, where Buxton Drive was laid out, providing an artery to the Glenleigh Park area. After the war temporary dwellings were erected on the old Ingrams farm and elsewhere at Sidley where the Southlands estate later became the largest municipal housing area. The Town Council also acquired or built flatlets for elderly people, and a development of this social policy was the erection of warden-care blocks at Sidley and Little Common.

CHAPTER FIVE

Local Government (1)

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT of Bexhill grew out of the manorial administration and the Vestry meeting of St. Peter's Church, whose parish comprised almost the area of the modern borough until the formation of St. Mark's parish in 1857. The identification of the civil parish with that of the priest's jurisdiction was of ancient origin.

Under the Poor Relief Act of 1601 parish overseers, two of whom had to be churchwardens, were appointed to provide for the relief of the poor and to raise the money by rates levied on property. The earliest known records of the Bexhill overseers are dated 1737. In June 1755 the Vestry empowered Arthur Brook and Francis Wood to raise £500 on their own security, and to make a rate for the repayment of this sum with interest, in order to 'build a workhouse on land taken by leave of His Grace the Duke of Dorset'. This land, long afterwards known as Workhouse Field, was on the eastern side of the Down and is now covered by the Down schools. The money first borrowed to build the workhouse was repaid in 1781 with a loan of £150 from the Amicable Society of Ninfield, the remainder being found by three residents of the parish, to whom the workhouse was mortgaged, and the Vestry approving a rate to pay off the capital and interest. A few years later a committee was appointed to inspect the workhouse, to hear complaints, and a surgeon agreed to attend the parish paupers for a fee of 12 guineas a year. It was customary for local farmers and others who could offer employment to utilise workhouse labour, and the Vestry minutes record that payment varied between £1 and £2 a year, though in one case a rate of threepence a day was specified.

In 1786 the Vestry agreed to indemnify the parish constables of the Hundred from all charges, in case of prosecution, for their attendance at quarter sessions.

By the early 19th century the Vestry meeting had become a 'Select Vestry', defined as a 'standing committee recruited by co-option'. The limited nature of its business may be judged from the fact that until 1870, when Bexhill had a population of about 2,000, the parish had no bank account. Then a newly-elected overseer was handed £400 of parish money in cash, for which he opened an account at the

Hastings branch of the then London and County Bank, later absorbed into the Westminster (now National Westminster) Bank. In the early 1880s Dr. Wills recorded in his diary that 'the actual business of the Vestry may be quickly described: the accounts were audited in the most casual and informal manner during a general conversation and never read and passed by the meeting at all; this was the way "it's always been done here" and if anything at Bexhill has been done for years you may as well fall in with it'.

Under the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 the duty of poor relief was transferred from parishes to Unions administered by Boards of Guardians, and the next year Bexhill became one of 14 parishes in the Battle Union. The overseers continued to levy and collect the Poor Rate on the precept of the Guardians. The Union built Battle workhouse, now Battle Hospital, to which the aged poor and destitute were sent, the parish workhouse being closed. Each parish was represented by elected members on the Board of Guardians and as Bexhill grew so its number of members was increased. By the 1890s, however, it was easily the largest parish in population and the then Urban Council objected to the proportion of the Union Poor Rate which the town had to pay, but an application to the Local Government Board for a separate Poor Law Union for Bexhill was rejected.

Despite the establishment of the Battle Union, memories of the old parish workhouse remained for many years, and as late as the 1880s 'Old Blyde' could recall to Dr. Wills that he was brought up in the parish workhouse. He afterwards became carter to a farmer at Pebsham and was able to buy a cottage and holding, with £50 saved from his own meagre earnings and £150 borrowed from his master. This he paid off in six years, getting up at 1 o'clock in the morning and eating his food, bread and cheese on the way to work in order to save time. One of Blyde's memories was of seeing the smugglers' convoys go by, the wagons covered by tarpaulins, when he was ploughing at Barnhorn in the early hours of the morning.

The Vestry continued to elect the overseers, who had to be confirmed in office by the Hastings divisional magistrates, until 1897 when these appointments were transferred to the Urban Council under the Local Government Act of 1894. Since 1853 there had been a paid assistant overseer and rate collector, but in 1906, when four senior members of the Town Council (Bexhill having become a chartered borough in 1902) were elected as overseers, the Council's finance clerk was re-titled Accountant and also appointed assistant overseer, thus simplifying the local rating administration. The office of overseer was abolished under the Rating and Valuation Act of 1925, and at Bexhill their remaining duties were formally transferred to the Corporation in April 1927, thus ending a local office which had existed for more than 300 years.

Under the mid-Victorian social legislation Boards of Guardians became rural sanitary authorities, but the failure of the Battle Union to provide for the growing needs of Bexhill led to the town obtaining its own Local Board of Health in 1884.

In 1880 a typhoid epidemic, resulting in a number of deaths, was caused by the contamination of well water from a farmyard, the disease being spread by an escape of sewer gas from the primitive pipes which emptied their contents into the fields below the Old Town. The main outfall was at the bottom of Belle Hill from where the unsavoury stream drifted through what is now Egerton Park to the sea. Several local gentlemen protested to the Local Government Board which placed responsibility for policy on the Board of Guardians as the sanitary authority. St. Peter's churchwardens were then petitioned to call a meeting of property owners and ratepayers 'for the purpose of considering the propriety of constituting the parish a local government district.' A resolution to this effect was carried and confirmed by a poll; a memorial to the Local Government Board was followed by an inquiry, held in March 1884 at the Bell Hotel assembly room, and from this the inspector reported: 'I am of opinion that Bexhill will in all probability grow very rapidly and it is desirable that the parish should be constituted a local government district without delay'. Prompt action followed: On May 7, 1884, the date which marks the beginning of modern local government in Bexhill, a Local Board of Health was constituted by an Order of the Local Government Board, and the first Board of nine members was elected in July. They decided on the official name of 'The Local Board of Bexhill' and this was sanctioned under the seal of the Local Government Board on July 28, 1884. The expenses of forming the Board amounted to £84 13s. 2d., hardly an excessive price for local independent administration.

The Local Board chose as chairman Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Lane, the first resident justice of the peace, who presided throughout the ten years of the Local Board and then became chairman of the Urban Council which succeeded it in January 1895 under the Local Government Act of the previous year.

The first Clerk to the Board was Mr. F. A. Langham, principal of a well-known legal practice at Hastings, of which borough he was afterwards mayor. At first there was no office accommodation at Bexhill and when he attended Local Board meetings, Mr. Langham brought the requisite books with him, driving from and returning to Hastings in a pony and trap. Clerk throughout the existence of the Board, and then to the Urban Council, he did much to establish sound local government procedure in the town. A medical officer, inspector of nuisances (later sanitary inspector) and surveyor were also appointed, together with an unpaid treasurer who was the manager of the Hastings branch of the Tunbridge Wells banking firm of Beeching, Hodgkin and Beeching. This was later taken over by Lloyds Bank, the manager of whose Devonshire Road branch at Bexhill was the official treasurer to the local authority until this appointment was terminated by the Corporation in 1945 and the office merged with that of the Borough Accountant who was re-titled Borough Treasurer. The office of treasurer in the person of a bank manager had become a sinecure, but was formerly required by statute.

The Local Board was a sanitary and highways authority, and as the most

urgent need in the growing town was for proper sanitation, the first loan raised by the Board, of £6,534, was for a main drainage system which extended from Sidley through the Old Town, Belle Hill and the London Road area (which was the first shopping centre of the new Bexhill). It was then, by agreement with the 7th Earl De La Warr, linked with the drainage system being constructed on the new De La Warr estate on the eastern side of the town, and discharged into the outfall at Galley Hill. This work, completed in 1886, remains an artery of the borough's sewerage system to this day.

In obtaining highways powers, Bexhill ceased to be dependent on the Hastings Highways Board. Under an Act of 1835, justices of the peace had been authorised to appoint a surveyor if the parish vestry did not do so, and later, in quarter sessions, to combine parishes into highways districts with waywardens elected by the parishes. Bexhill was in the area of the Hastings Board. The new Local Board's first rate of one shilling in the £ was levied chiefly to pay for road improvements, the original parish roads being largely made up of beach and which became mud tracks in winter.

The Board first met at the Bell Hotel, then at Dorset Cottage, Hastings Road, the home of its surveyor to whom an allowance was made for providing accommodation, and afterwards, from 1893 until the first part of the Town Hall was opened in 1895, at the Institute, Station Road, a club and reading room which commemorated the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887 and is now enlarged into the Youth Centre.

The Local Government Act of 1894 decreed that urban sanitary authorities should be called urban district councils, and Bexhill's first Urban Council of 15 members was elected in January 1895. After the death of Colonel Lane in April that year, Viscount Cantelupe, who succeeded to the De La Warr earldom the next year, was chairman until he did not seek re-election to the Council during the South African War. Mr. Langham resigned as Clerk to the Council in 1899 and was succeeded by his deputy and partner Mr. E. Sholto Douglas, who became the first Town Clerk when Bexhill was granted a charter of incorporation in 1902.

The greatest event of the Urban Council's eight years existence was the ceremonial opening of the Town Hall, for which the site had been purchased by the Local Board in 1893. The opening ceremony was performed by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Joseph Renals, who at the invitation of Lord Cantelupe came in state with the sheriffs and the Lord Mayor's coach. An elaborate procession through the town made the day one of the most spectacular in local history, commemorated by a plaque inside the main entrance to the Town Hall. The building was designed by Mr. Henry Ward, of Hastings, who was later the architect for the Congregational and St. Stephen's churches. These years were also notable for the establishment by the Urban Council of the local electricity undertaking which began to supply current in 1900; the lease and subsequent purchase of

Egerton Park, which had been started as a private enterprise by Mr. John Webb as part of the Egerton Park estate; the acquisition of part of the sea front belonging to the De La Warr estate, and of the management of the Down over which, however, the Lord of the Manor continues to exercise the surviving manorial rights.

One public service which remains a direct link with the former Battle Union is that of the registrar of births, marriages and deaths. Under the Registry and Marriages Acts of 1836, the Battle Union, which then formed the only effective local authority in the county area, was instructed by the Registrar General to provide a registry office for the maintenance of such records. This was opened in 1837 and the superintendent registrar's office located at Battle. An office at Bexhill was opened in 1896 for the registration of births and deaths, but civil marriage ceremonies continued to be performed at Battle.

For Poor Law purposes Bexhill remained in the Battle Union until boards of guardians came to an end under the Local Government Act of 1929, and the following year responsibility for poor relief was transferred to the East Sussex County Council acting through a Public Assistance Committee. This administration continued until National Assistance came into being in 1948, a service now under the control of the Department of Health and Social Security. Associated with the Poor Law had been the work of the relieving officers, and at Bexhill this was successively administered for 55 years until 1947 by Thomas Cane and his son Harry Cane.

In these days when the part of women in public life is taken for granted, it is interesting to recall that their public service began with Poor Law work, and the first woman to represent Bexhill on a public authority was Miss Georgina Egerton, a sister-in-law of the 8th Earl De La Warr, who was elected one of the town's members on the Battle Board of Guardians in 1894.

CHAPTER SIX

Local Government (2)

BEXHILL WAS GRANTED the status of an incorporated borough by King Edward VII on April 7, 1902, but a petition for a charter had been made to Queen Victoria nearly two years earlier. The campaign for borough status was started by a few citizens meeting at the Marine Hotel, where Dalmore Court now stands. One of them was Mr. A. Vincett Parsons, resident director of the *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer,* and in October 1898 Mr. Fred Wilson, who edited the paper for nearly 50 years, published an article entitled 'Bexhill to be incorporated?'

Although the Urban Council rejected by a single vote a motion to apply for a charter, a public meeting in April 1899 unanimously carried a resolution 'that in the opinion of this meeting the time has arrived for the inauguration of a movement with the object of obtaining a charter of incorporation for the town of Bexhill.' Earl De La Warr, chairman of the Urban Council, was elected chairman of an Incorporation Committee; a petition to the Queen in Council, drawn up by Mr. R. H. Gaby, a local solicitor, was submitted in June 1900; a public inquiry in December that year on behalf of the Privy Council showed no opposition, and in the draft charter the next year Lord De La Warr was named as Provisional Charter Mayor.

On March 24, 1902, the Clerk to the Privy Council notified the Order of His Majesty in Council approving the draft of the charter of incorporation, and a few days later Mr. Gaby, as solicitor to the Incorporation Committee, received a bill for £106 18s. to defray the expenses connected with the issue of Letters Patent. The charter was signed by King Edward VII on April 7 and handed by Mr. Gaby's London agents to a deputation from Bexhill on May 21. These gentlemen received a ceremonial welcome on their return to Bexhill and the town's reception of the charter remains an outstanding day in local history. The document was publicly read to a large crowd outside the Town Hall and a procession and other festivities followed.

The Urban Council continued in office until November 1, 1902, when the first elections were held for the five wards into which the new borough was divided. (Municipal elections were held annually on November 1 until the change to May was made under the Representation of the People Act 1948 and became effective the next year.) The Borough Council has always consisted of six aldermen and 18 councillors, the Central ward returning six councillors until three members were allotted to a new Sidley ward in 1950. No Sussex town has received a charter since the grant of incorporation to Bexhill which is thus the youngest of the 10 boroughs in the county.

In 1927 the silver jubilee of the incorporation was celebrated with a drumhead service outside the Town Hall, honoured by the presence of the Lord Lieutenant of Sussex, Lord Leconfield, and there was a historical pageant in Egerton Park. Twenty-five years later, when in 1952 the borough was able to present its first large-scale civic display since before the second world war, the Lord Lieutenant of the county, the Duke of Norfolk, attended a special meeting of the Town Council, held at the De La Warr Pavilion, when three honorary freedoms of the borough were conferred, a ceremony also attended by the mayors of all the other Sussex boroughs. Later in the year there was a representative civic exhibition recording the town's development. In the diamond jubilee of the borough in 1962 a mayoral appeal for gifts to enhance the collection of municipal silver and plate resulted in many useful contributions from local organisations, businesses and individuals.

Although the 8th Earl De La Warr had been named as Provisional Charter Mayor in the Draft Charter of Incorporation, he did not, in fact, become the first mayor of the borough and did not offer himself as a candidate for that office. This was overlooked by those who assumed that he would become the mayor but who opposed him because of the divorce granted to the Countess in the summer of 1902. Within a few days of November 9 (the day for mayor-making in nearly all boroughs until the change to May under the Representation of the People Act of 1948), the town had no prospective mayor, and a deputation of the Town Council, which had just been elected went to London and invited Mr. Ebenezer Howard, who had inherited the Birchington estate but had never taken part in public life, to accept that office. His acquiescence led to a distinguished mayoralty which set a high standard for the new borough. Mr. Howard, on whose estate the well-known Seafield, Effingham House and St. Wilfrid's (afterwards Falconbury) independent schools were developed, promoted for some years an annual cricket festival which was noted for prodigious scores; on one occasion 1,100 runs were recorded in a two-day match, and one innings was declared closed at more than 600 runs for half the wickets, with an individual contribution of 239 not out. On the Sunday after his election as mayor, Mr. Howard, in his robe of office, the robed aldermen and the councillors (who were not provided with robes until 1925), attended St. Peter's

Church whose rectors have always filled the office of Mayor's Chaplain, irrespective of the religious adherence of individual mayors, and who lead in prayer at the beginning of each Town Council meeting.

After Mr. Howard's initial year, Earl De La Warr was mayor for two years and he, with his son the 9th and present earl who was mayor from 1932–35, provide, with the 1st Earl Brassey and his son the 2nd and last earl, the only instances of father and son occupying the civic chair. The Howard, De La Warr and Brassey mayoralties, with the first of Daniel Mayer's four years in 1905–06 were notable in that the holders were not members of the Council at the time of their election as mayor.

The record term of six years as mayor belongs to W. N. Cuthbert, a former manager for the Bank of Persia, who was elected in 1936 and continued in office through the most difficult years of the second world war. His successor, F. F. B. Wimshurst, is the only mayor to have died during his year of office. One former Town Clerk, Mr. S. J. Taylor, afterwards became a member of the Council, alderman and mayor (1946–47) but resigned because of ill-health, and E. T. Robinson (1965–66) is the only mayor to have been defeated at the municipal elections so that he concluded his mayoral year without being an elected member of the Council. W. H. Mullens (1927–28) is the only mayor of the borough to have been High Sheriff of Sussex, an office he held in 1916–17.

Of the borough's three women mayors, Mrs. C. I. Meads (1930–32) was distinguished in the public life of East Sussex for half a century; Mrs. J. O. Alexander was mayor three times (1954–56 and 1962–63), and Mrs. M. E. Ackland was honoured in 1966–67, a year memorable for the first official visit of a reigning monarch, that of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh during a tour of East Sussex. The mayoralty of Earl De La Warr in 1935 was marked by the private visit of King George V and Queen Mary to Cooden Beach Hotel (which the De La Warr family then owned) and the King inspected the De La Warr Pavilion then being built.

The first mayor to proclaim a monarch was J. A. Paton at the Accession of King George V in 1910, and others to whom this privilege has fallen have been Colonel O. Striedinger (King Edward VIII in 1936), W. N. Cuthbert (King George VI, 1936) and G. H. Goodwin (Queen Elizabeth II, 1952). Bexhill having become a chartered borough after the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, the death of Edward VII was the first occasion on which the town had the right to be notified of the demise of the Crown and the accession of a new monarch. Mr. Paton was diligent in ensuring that Bexhill was on the list of boroughs to be so informed and he received the Proclamation two hours before the official announcement at St. James's Palace, so that the local ceremony was timed to coincide with that historic event.

The honorary freedom of the borough has been conferred on 10 occasions,

the first to be thus honoured being the 1st Earl (then Baron) Brassey who gave the borough its gold mayoral chain of office. The freedom was conferred on him on November 9, 1907, and one hour later he was elected mayor. In 1920 the freedom was conferred on J. A. Paton who in 1910 was the first mayor of the borough to proclaim a new monarch, King George V, on the death of King Edward VII, and was also mayor in the brilliant Coronation year of 1911. During these years the Central Parade and Colonnade were opened. W. N. Cuthbert was made a freeman after the end of his record six years as mayor, the ceremony, in 1943, being held in the Council Chamber despite the wartime evacuation of the Town Hall due to bomb damage.

In 1952 the golden jubilee of the borough was marked by the conferment of the freedom on Mrs. C. I. Meads, R. C. Sewell and E. W. C. Bowrey at a special meeting of the Town Council held at the De La Warr Pavilion and attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Sussex (the Duke of Norfolk) and the mayors of all the other boroughs in the county. Mrs. Meads, apart from being the first woman mayor of Bexhill, was prominent in East Sussex and civic life for more than 50 years. Mr. Sewell, proprietor of the Devonshire Hotel for thirty years, served the town in many capacities for more than half a century and his mayoral year in 1924–25 was marked by the Corporation Act under which the borough bought the private water and gas undertaking which had operated since the 1880s, and also acquired the powers which enabled the De La Warr Pavilion to be built. Mr. Bowrey, who retired to Bexhill from business in India, was mayor in 1923–24 and again in 1944–46, years which saw the end of the second world war. He was prominent in the town's link with the devastated French village of Bayencourt which was 'adopted' by Bexhill after the first world war and provided with a water supply.

Miss F. H. Burrows, who became a freeman in 1958, was for many years headmistress and afterwards warden of Ancaster House, founded by her father as a boys school in 1898 and changed to a girls school by her widowed mother in 1906, becoming one of the best-known independent schools in the country. A former alderman of the borough, Miss Burrows resigned from the Town Council when her school was evacuated during the second world war. In 1962 the freedom was conferred on Dr. C. Pycroft, chairman of the former Borough Development Committee of the Town Council for many years, in which office he greatly influenced the expansion of Bexhill as a residential resort after the second world war. As a hospital surgeon in the South Yorkshire coalfield, he had descended the mine in the great Frickley colliery disaster of 1923 and tended the injured until all had been brought to the surface. The varied public and social work for many years of Mrs. J. O. Alexander, together with that of Mr. H. Riley, secretary of the Bexhill Council of Social Service since its formation in 1933, and for a quarter of a century secretary to the town's Citizens Advice Bureau, was acknowledged by the confer-

ment of the freedom in 1968. Mr. Riley, an alderman of the East Sussex County Council, is the only freeman not to have been a member of the Town Council, and Miss Burrows and he are the only freemen who have not held the office of mayor.

In 1936 Earl De La Warr, who had completed three years as mayor during which the De La Warr Pavilion and Bexhill Hospital had been built, asked for a proposal that he should receive the freedom of the borough to be deferred because of local controversy over the Pavilion, and it has never been revived.

The first attempt by the Corporation to enlarge its powers by means of a private Act of Parliament was made in 1903, but was defeated in a poll of the ratepayers. The chief opposition was to a clause which would have enabled the Town Council to open a show and sale room in connection with the electricity undertaking which had been inherited from the Urban Council the previous year. Another clause would have allowed the Council to spend money on entertainments, which was not permitted until the Public Health Act of 1907. In 1921 a ratepayers poll also rejected a Bill which would have enabled the Corporation to acquire the Pavilion (the former Kursaal whose name had been changed during the first world war for patriotic reasons), and to have improved the sea front in that vicinity.

Three years later the Council promoted a Bill of which a principal object was to acquire the privately-owned Bexhill Water and Gas Company which had supplied those services since they were started in the 1880s. The Bill also made provision for municipal entertainments, a clause which was unsuccessfully opposed by the Pavilion Company before a Select Committee of the House of Lords and was later the subject of amendments in the House of Commons which were withdrawn after negotiation. The Bill received Royal Assent in December 1925 and the water and gas undertakings passed into municipal control the following May. One of the entertainments clauses enabled the Council to build the De La Warr Pavilion.

Although the borough cannot vie with more ancient corporations in collections of insignia and plate, its possessions are by no means negligible. The first which was acquired was the gold mayoral chain, the gift of Lord Brassey, and formally presented to the Town Council in October 1906. Shields on the collar record the names of mayors from the incorporation in 1902 until the silver jubilee in 1927. The central link of the chain contains the Crown and cypher of King Edward VII in gold and enamel, to which are attached the coronet and monogram of Lord Brassey. The gold badge, designed to match the chain, contains the emblazoned arms of the borough in their heraldic colours, while the mace and sword, emblems of magisterial justice and power are inserted.

An application for the grant of a coat-of-arms had been made earlier, during the mayoralty of Daniel Mayer, but the parchment with the Order of Garter King of Arms, describing the arms, illustrating them in full colour, and bearing the seals

of Garter, Clarenceux and Norroy Kings of Arms was not received until early in 1907. The heraldic description of the coat-of-arms is as follows:

'Ermine a cross double parted and fretted Gules between, in the first quarter a mitre, and in the second a demi-lion passant guardant conjoined to the demi-hulk of a ship both Or, in the third an Estoile Sable, and in the fourth a Mallard proper, on a Chief Argent above waves of the sea, a demi-sun in splendour issuant from the upper part of the centre of the Chief also proper, all within a Border Azure charged with eight Martlets of the third, and for a Crest on a Wreath of the Colours on a Mound of Sand a Martello Tower proper'.

Also in October 1906 the Council was presented with a mace, the cost of which had been met by a public subscription organised by the Bexhill Association 'to complete the mayoral insignia', and surplus funds from the Whit-Monday Horse Show that year, an annual event started in 1903 and which remains a principal one in the town's calendar to this day. The mace is described as follows:

'The bulb is ornamented with the newly granted arms of the borough in proper heraldic enamels surmounted by sprays of oak and laurels connected by ornaments of dolphins, tridents and seaweed, beautifully chased. The whole is surmounted by the Imperial Crown and the full arms of His Majesty the King. The supports holding the bulb of the mace are excellent specimens of the silversmith's art and represent sea horses.'

Among other civic possessions are the following:

An embossed gilt key commemorating the opening of the extension to Egerton Park by the Lord Mayor of London (Sir W. Vaughan Morgan) in 1906;

A gavel made from the Old Town walnut tree (the stump of which was removed in 1921), given by Lord Brassey and used by Lord Buckhurst (now the 9th Earl De La Warr) at the laying of the commemorative stone on the occasion of the opening of the Town Hall extension, which includes the present Council Chamber, in 1908, together with the silver trowel used on the same occasion;

A solid 20-carat Indian gold plate given in memory of His Highness the Maharajah of Cooch Behar who died at Bexhill in 1911;

The mayoress's chain given by subscribers in 1925 with the personal replica presented to the first wearer, Mrs. R. C. Sewell, and returned by her to the Corporation at the diamond jubilee of the borough in 1962;

A silver loving cup given in 1926 by Major W. H. Mullens, mayor in 1927–28, and who also gave the silver fanfare trumpets and banners commemorating his year as High Sheriff of Sussex in 1916–17;

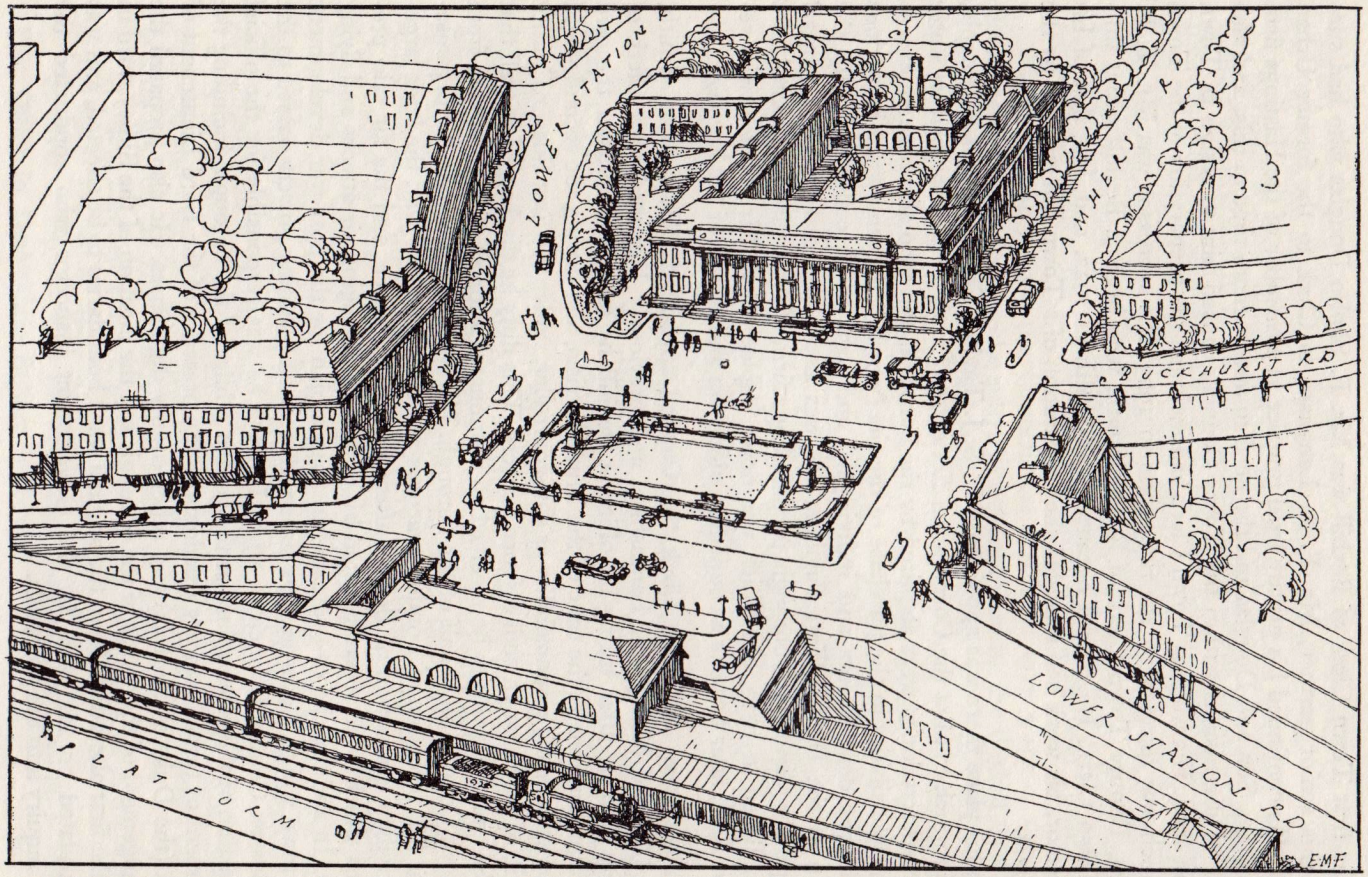
A three-handled tankard presented by the Smugglers of Little Common at the silver jubilee of the Corporation in 1927; and

A silver stamp case and gilt key commemorating the opening of the Head Post Office in Devonshire Square in 1931.

The first Town Clerk of Bexhill was Mr. E. Sholto Douglas who had succeeded his senior partner, Mr. F. A. Langham as Clerk to the former Urban Council. He continued his private legal practice as a member of the Hastings firm of Langham, Son and Douglas and the need to devote more time to this, and also because of dissensions within the Town Council, caused him to resign as Town Clerk in 1904. His work as Town Clerk had included the preparation of the Town Bill which was rejected by the ratepayers in 1903. His successor was Mr. T. E. Rodgers, Deputy Town Clerk of Bournemouth, who became Bexhill's first full-time Town Clerk. He retired because of ill-health in 1922, and, like that of his predecessor, his work had included the preparation of a Town Bill rejected by the ratepayers.

In his place there was appointed Mr. S. J. Taylor, Town Clerk of Barnstaple, who did much to pilot the Corporation Act of 1925 under which the private water and gas undertakings were acquired by the borough, and who also bore an exceptional responsibility in the purchase of the site (which had been owned by various Government departments and individuals) and legal work connected with the erection of the De La Warr Pavilion. He was also concerned with the general development plan for the borough, prepared by a firm of town planning consultants and published in 1930, but which was never implemented. Mr. Taylor, who retired in 1938, later became a councillor, alderman and mayor of the borough.

In his stead as Town Clerk the Council appointed Mr. Edward Smith, Town Clerk of Middleton, Lancashire, and previously Deputy Town Clerk of Hendon. Shortly after taking up office at Bexhill he had to administer the civil defence precautions at the time of the Munich crisis, and during the second world war carried a heavy responsibility as sub-controller, under the East Sussex County Council, of the borough civil defence services. This duty he discharged so well that after the end of hostilities he received an illuminated address of appreciation from the Town Council on behalf of the borough. His work had included the organisation for the reception of London evacuees at the outbreak of war, the later large-scale civilian evacuation of Bexhill after the fall of France, and the air raid precautions which were severely tested by numerous damaging air attacks and flying bombs. In addition he co-ordinated in 1943 a plan for the post-war development of the town which, however, was superseded when planning powers passed to the East Sussex County Council in 1947. In 1952 he was responsible for the official organisation of the celebrations at the golden jubilee of the borough, including the conferment of three honorary freedoms in the presence of the Lord Lieutenant of Sussex (the Duke of Norfolk) and other county dignitaries. He also prepared the re-arrangement of the wards of the borough and the creation of the Sidley ward in 1950, the first alterations from the original ward boundaries to be effected, and was congratulated on his work by the Government inspector who conducted the public inquiry into the proposals.



VIII.—This town centre scheme was advocated by the planning consultants Adams Thompson and Fry, of Westminster, in a report to the Corporation on the development of Bexhill in 1930. It envisaged a new railway station fronting Town Hall Square, and also a loop line connecting the south coast route with the then Bexhill West to Crowhurst branch line.

On his retirement in 1963, shortly before he would have completed a quarter of a century as Town Clerk, he was succeeded by his deputy, Mr. R. S. Robinson, who had come to Bexhill from Stourbridge in 1947 as assistant solicitor and who became Deputy Town Clerk in 1949 on the retirement of Mr. C. W. Hayward whose 47 years in local government service in Bexhill, dating from the days of the Urban Council, constitute a record not likely to be equalled. As Town Clerk Mr. Robinson was early concerned with the borough's efforts to induce British Rail and the Ministry of Transport to retain the Bexhill West to Crowhurst branch railway line which, however, was closed in 1964. He carried through an outstanding essay in administration on the occasion of the visit of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh in 1966, resulting in a memorable day in local history which did credit to Bexhill.

The absence of ancient endowments from which charities or deserving individuals could by assisted by the town led to the inauguration in 1917, during the mayoralty of Alderman J. B. Wall (a distinguished local architect who designed the Colonnade and many business premises in the town centre) of the Bexhill Trust. Its funds were early augmented by the proceeds of an athletic sports day organised by the Canadian military training school which had its headquarters at the Metropole Hotel. (This stood on the site of the putting green at the western end of the De La Warr Pavilion.) The Bexhill Trust is managed by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the time being, with two other members of the Town Council and five other representatives, the Town Clerk being the honorary secretary and treasurer.

At the time of the incorporation of the borough in 1902 the boundary was marked out by 63 large stones spaced along the perimeter from Normans Bay on the west via Lunsford Cross to Glyne Gap on the Hastings county borough boundary, where stone No. 63 was washed away by the sea within a few years. The ceremony of Beating the Bounds was carried out in 1909, 1925 and in 1928 when the remaining 62 stones were traced. These inspections were notable for some jollity, and members and officials of the Town Council were ceremonially 'bumped' at the various stones en route. An attempt to make a commemorative inspection at the golden jubilee of the borough in 1952 failed to find enough enthusiasts to walk the boundary.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Parliamentary

UNTIL THE REFORM ACT of 1832 the county of Sussex returned 'two knights of the shire' to Parliament as it had done from medieval times, along with 26 Members for various boroughs. Some seats were controlled by the influential Pelham family, headed by the Dukes of Newcastle, which in the 17th century acquired the lordship of the Rape of Hastings and with it the ancient manor of Pebsham in the parish of Bexhill. One of the county members from 1801–12 was the redoubtable and eccentric 'Jack' Fuller whose pyramid tomb dominates Brightling Churchyard. He was once forcibly removed from the House of Commons for calling the Speaker the 'insignificant little fellow in the wig', and he refused a peerage on the ground that he was 'born Jack Fuller and thus would he die'.

The Act of 1832 abolished or reduced most of the ancient borough representation and divided the county area into East and West divisions (based on the Norman rapes) each returning two Members. Bexhill came into the East division until the Redistribution Act of 1885, at which time the franchise was extended to agricultural and industrial workers in county constituencies.

The 1885 Act deprived the borough of Rye of its Member of Parliament and created a Rye division of the eastern part of East Sussex with the exception of the borough of Hastings. Bexhill soon became the largest town in the division but Rye remained the administrative centre where the election count and declaration of the poll took place until the Representation of the People Act of 1948. Bexhill was not specified by name in the definition of the constituency, which was Number 6, Eastern, or Rye division in the county of Sussex, comprising the sessional divisions of Battle, Burwash, Frant, Hastings and Rye, the municipal boroughs of Hastings and Rye, the ancient town of Winchelsea and the Liberty of The Sluice and Petit Iham (non-corporate members of Hastings). Within this definition Bexhill was part of the sessional division of Hastings.

The first Member for the Rye division was Colonel A. M. Brookfield who commanded, and later became the honorary colonel of the 1st (Cinque Ports) Rifle

Volunteers, and he held the seat against Liberal opposition until accepting a consular appointment in 1903. He lived to the age of 86 and died in 1940. The by-election caused by his resignation led to the only occasion on which the Conservative party has failed to hold any of the parliamentary divisions of which Bexhill has formed part. In 1903, however, the party fortunes were declining in the country, the local organisation had deteriorated, and the Liberals secured the return of Dr. C. F. Hutchinson, a Sussex medico who had a winter practice at Monte Carlo, then much frequented by the fashionable English at that season of the year. Dr. Hutchinson defeated Mr. Edward Boyle, of Hurst Green, grandfather of Lord Boyle, a former Minister of Education who forsook politics to become Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University.

The Hon. T. A. Brassey, son and heir of Lord Brassey, then became the prospective Conservative candidate, a departure from the family's Liberal allegiance, but he was unable to follow the party line sufficiently to feel justified in contesting the seat, and retired in 1905. The party then chose Mr. George Courthope, who by inheriting the Whiligh estate in north Sussex in 1910 became one of the principal landowners in the county. A Courthope had represented Hastings in Parliament in 1400, and the estate supplied timber to the medieval House of Commons and again for the restoration of the Chamber after the bomb damage of the second world war. Mr. Courthope was wounded and awarded the Military Cross for gallantry at the Battle of Aubers Ridge in 1915 when serving with the 5th Battalion The Royal Sussex Regiment which suffered heavy casualties, and he afterwards commanded the battalion as a Territorial unit. He received a baronetcy in 1925. Mr. Courthope first won the Rye division, which he was to represent for 39 years, at the famous election of 1906 when the Liberals swept the country. The constituency, where he defeated Dr. Hutchinson, and Hastings borough, where Mr. Freeman-Thomas, a brother-in-law of the 8th Earl De La Warr, and afterwards Viceroy of India, was unseated, were the only places to record Conservative gains. In the two general elections of 1910 Mr. Courthope defeated Mr. St. John Hutchinson, son of the former Liberal Member and who subsequently had a notable legal career. In the first four elections after the war Mr. George Ellis, a well-known Rye businessman, unsuccessfully contested the seat for the Liberals.

The first Labour candidate was at the bottom of the poll in 1929 when the Liberal was Mr. William Osborn, son of a former chairman of the East Sussex County Council, and an authority on agriculture who had helped to compile for Lloyd George the Liberal manifesto 'The Land and the Nation'. The economic crisis of 1931, with the consequent general election, provided the only unopposed return in the division except that of Colonel Brookfield in 1895. In 1935, the last election before the second world war, there was a woman candidate for the only time, Miss Dorothy Osborn, sister of the candidate of 1929, and a champion of Liberalism in this area for many years. At the Dissolution of Parliament in 1945

Sir George Courthope retired from the House of Commons and was raised to the peerage as Baron Courthope of Whiligh in the county of Sussex. The subsequent election returned as Member Mr. W. N. Cuthbert, mayor of Bexhill from 1936–42 and who became Member for Arundel and Shoreham when the Rye division was broken up several years later.

Under this redistribution Bexhill became part of an enlarged Eastbourne county division, an unpopular arrangement, and the Member was Sir Charles Taylor who had already represented Eastbourne for many years and had been the 'baby' of the House when first returned in his twenties. Bexhill was in the Eastbourne division for the 1950 and 1951 elections, at the latter of which the Labour candidate was a nephew of the Prime Minister (Mr, later Lord, Attlee). There was much local satisfaction when, in January 1955, Parliament approved an Order restoring a Rye division, though its boundaries differed slightly from those of the old constituency. Bexhill endeavoured unsuccessfully to have its name given to the new division but it became the administrative centre in place of Rye, and the Town Clerk of Bexhill is the Deputy Acting Returning Officer at Parliamentary elections, responsible to the Clerk of the Peace for East Sussex who executes the directives of the High Sheriff of the county as returning officer. Since the first general election in 1955 Mr. Bryant Godman Irvine, a Sussex farmer and barrister, has easily held the seat against Labour and Liberal opposition.

Because of the overwhelming Conservative majority in the Rye and Eastbourne divisions, there have been few major political occasions or visits by eminent politicians, but Lloyd George spoke at the York Hall at Bexhill (now part of the Post Office garage premises in London Road) in 1904; Ramsay MacDonald addressed the town's Lecture Society during the first world war and when Prime Minister stayed at Cooden Beach Hotel; Herbert (afterwards Lord) Samuel addressed a Brotherhood meeting in 1909; Horatio Bottomley, then at the height of his fame, one at the Kursaal in 1915; Sir John Simon, Lord Sankey and Mr. Walter Elliot were guests at the mayoral banquets of Earl De La Warr in 1932–35; Neville Chamberlain, when Prime Minister, paid a private visit to Cooden in 1937, and Clement Attlee (as then was) dined privately in the town after speaking in support of his nephew at Eastbourne in 1951. Winston Churchill, as Prime Minister, drove through the town when visiting army units just before the Normandy invasion in 1944, and Lord Woolton paid a visit as Minister of Food. The visit of Sir Keith Joseph in 1964 was, however, the first occasion for many years that a Cabinet minister had addressed a political meeting in the town, and an outstanding event in local political history was Sir Alec Douglas-Home's visit in 1968 to speak at a mass meeting at the De La Warr Pavilion. Four years earlier the then Liberal leader, Jo Grimond, made a brief call during a whistle-stop election tour.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Law and Order

BEXHILL'S LINKS WITH SUSSEX have long been influenced by the separation of the county into its eastern and western divisions. Historically this was a geographical convenience; we have seen how in medieval times the bishops of Chichester maintained the manor house at Bexhill as a residence on their journeys in the eastern part of the diocese. Her Majesty's Lieutenancy covers the whole of Sussex, as does the jurisdiction of the High Sheriff; the assizes are the county visitations of the judges of the High Court, now to Lewes but in olden times often only to Horsham because of the primitive roads southwards. For quarter sessions purposes, however, there was for long an unofficial division of the county into east and west, each comprising three of the ancient rapes devised by the Conqueror. This arrangement was confirmed by Acts of Parliament in 1864 and 1865. Meanwhile the Reform Act of 1832 had created the East and West Sussex Parliamentary divisions and Bexhill was included in the former until the Redistribution Act of 1885.

Until the Local Government Act of 1888 created county councils, much of the civil administration outside the chartered boroughs, apart from the Poor Law under boards of guardians, some highways maintenance, and parochial matters dealt with by parish vestries, was in the hands of the county magistrates in quarter sessions and a few examples of their civil jurisdiction remain to this day. At first Bexhill was allowed one member on the East Sussex County Council and at the election in January 1889 Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Lane (the 'father of local government' in Bexhill) was returned, later becoming the first county alderman from the town. The almost exclusive growth of Bexhill as a seaside resort diminished its interest in the hinterland and county generally, especially as the old village families died out and new residents had no affinity with rural Sussex. At the county council elections in 1904 it was commented locally that 'Bexhill, we fear, takes little interest in the county council and that feeling is heartily reciprocated'. Ties have become closer in more recent years with the volume of legislation delegated to county councils, some of which is administered by the Town Council on behalf of the East Sussex authority.

In 1904, the borough was allocated a second county councillor, increased to three in 1913 and to four in 1934. It remains at that number today, but the local boundaries of the county electoral divisions were re-adjusted in 1952 with the creation of the Sidley municipal ward and again in 1970. The contraction of the six municipal wards into four county electoral divisions is a complication which tends to diminish public interest in county affairs.

The record in county council service so far as Bexhill is concerned is easily that of the late Mrs. C. I. Meads, the borough's first woman mayor (1930–32) and honorary freeman (1952). She was a county councillor from 1919 to 1945 and then an alderman until her retirement ten years later. Her contribution to the health and education services was especially noteworthy and she did much to secure the building of the local grammar schools in the early 1920s.

Magistracy

The administration of justice in Bexhill has always been through county magistrates who, despite the confirmation of the divisions of East and West Sussex by Acts of Parliament in the 1860s, continued until the first world war to be appointed to the commission of the peace for the whole county, and since then to one for the administrative county of East Sussex. It was not until January 1929, however, following a petition by the Corporation, that a Bexhill petty sessional division was formed to deal with borough cases, the local magistrates having previously been members of the Hastings county or divisional bench which was distinct from that of the commission of the peace for the borough of Hastings. Until the Cantelupe Road court buildings were opened in January 1903 all Bexhill cases, with the exception of some occasional courts held at the Town Hall, were heard by the justices sitting at Hastings. Afterwards, until 1929, weekly sittings at Bexhill remained those of the Hastings divisional bench.

Up to 1969 the mayor of a borough was an ex-officio justice (and in borough courts presided over the bench by virtue of his office), but despite Bexhill petitions in 1908 and 20 years later, when the local divisional bench was formed, the borough has never been granted a separate commission of the peace. The issue was first raised after the opening of the Cantelupe Road court in 1903 when Mr. Ebenezer Howard, the first mayor of Bexhill, which had received its charter of incorporation the previous year, was invited to preside over the initial sitting at the new courthouse. It was wrongly presumed from this that the Hastings county bench had conceded a mayoral right to preside at the Bexhill sittings in borough cases, and when this could not be resolved Mr. Howard declined to sit again as an ex-officio magistrate, feeling that to do so except as chairman would be incompatible with the dignity of the first citizen of the town. The petition to the Lord Chancellor in 1908 was opposed by the Hastings county justices, and that in 1928, addressed to

the Crown through the Home Office, proved equally unsuccessful. So also was an attempt to obtain a county court at Bexhill which remains dependent on sittings at Hastings for these civil proceedings and associated services.

The first resident of Bexhill to be elected chairman of the Hastings county bench as it was then constituted was Mr. Edman Hurst who was thus honoured in 1919. He was a member of an old Eastbourne family which settled at Ocklynge manor in King Charles II's reign, and the name of the house he built at Little Common (now converted into flats) commemorated the old family home. He left on record that he walked some 8,000 miles on magisterial duties between 1896 and 1919. The first resident magistrate at Bexhill in modern times was Lieutenant-Colonel Lane, of Broadoak, who was appointed in 1872. Not until the early 1890s were further local appointments made, one being that of Viscount Cantelupe, afterwards the 8th Earl De La Warr. The town's first woman magistrate was Mrs. Ivy Sansom, appointed in 1925, and who later became an alderman of the borough.

In the latter part of the last century the Clerk to the Hastings county bench was Mr. F. A. Langham, a solicitor in private practice who was also Clerk to the Bexhill Local Board and afterwards to the Urban Council. In 1899 he was succeeded as Clerk to the justices by his son, Mr. F. G. Langham, who continued to serve when court sittings were commenced at Bexhill, became Clerk to the Bexhill magistrates when the separate petty sessional division was formed in 1929, and died in office in 1946. He commanded the 5th (Cinque Ports) Battalion The Royal Sussex Regiment from 1911 to 1917, was awarded the C.M.G. and mentioned in dispatches for his leadership at the battle of the Somme. Since his death the Clerk to the justices has been Mr. L. A. Edgar who had been a partner in the Hastings practice of Langham Douglas and Company, and who is also clerk to other benches of magistrates in East Sussex.

Police

The Act of Parliament in 1829 which estabished the Metropolitan Police Force was the forerunner of permissive legislation under which an East Sussex Constabulary was formed in 1840 with 23 men. Bexhill was allocated to the 'Battel' division under a superintendent with four constables stationed at Northiam, Boreham Street, Guestling and Robertsbridge. The first police house at Bexhill was in Belle Hill and the constable is reputed to have fenced off a portion of the roadway outside so that his little daughter could play in safety! By that time Bexhill had been transferred to a Hastings division of the county force which included Guestling (where the superintendent lived), Beckley, Northiam, Peasmarsh, Iden, Brede, Winchelsea, Ore and St. Leonards. In the 1880s, when Bexhill was expanding rapidly with the development of the De La Warr and other estates, the town was

one of five parishes in a Guestling police division, the others being Guestling itself, Ore, Red Lake and Silverhill, the last two now part of the county borough of Hastings. At that time Bexhill had two constables and by the end of the decade there was also an officer (often needed in those rougher days) at Sidley.

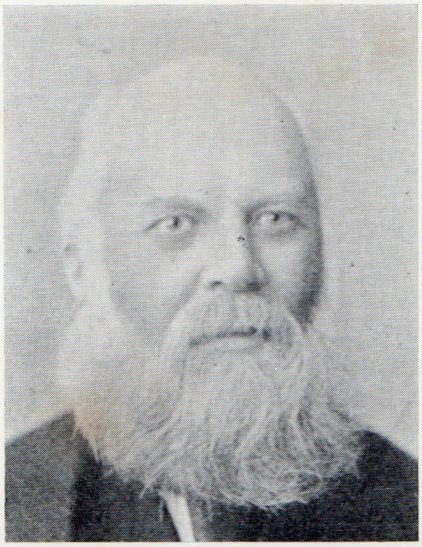
Meanwhile a small police station had been built in Barrack Road, including accommodation for a sergeant, and equipped with two cells, and this did duty until the Cantelupe Road station was opened in 1903 at the same time as the new courthouse. There was an early demand for telephone communication between the two stations. The Cantelupe Road one provided living accommodation for a superintendent, the first time Bexhill had an officer of that seniority. There was some objection from nearby residents to a police station in the vicinity, and in the event it proved to be badly sited, for the town did not develop in that direction as much as had been anticipated.

During the second world war the Sussex police forces were amalgamated and not until 1947 was a Bexhill division of the East Sussex Force formed. Four years later the division was enlarged to include the former Battle, Rye and Hailsham divisions. As from January 1968 there was effected a merger of the five police forces in Sussex into the present county constabulary, Bexhill being placed in the Hastings division.

In 1962 the Home Office approved a scheme for improvements and extensions to the Cantelupe Road station where the present canteen and recreation room were built out of the East Sussex allocation from *The Times* fund raised in recognition of police services during the general strike of 1926.

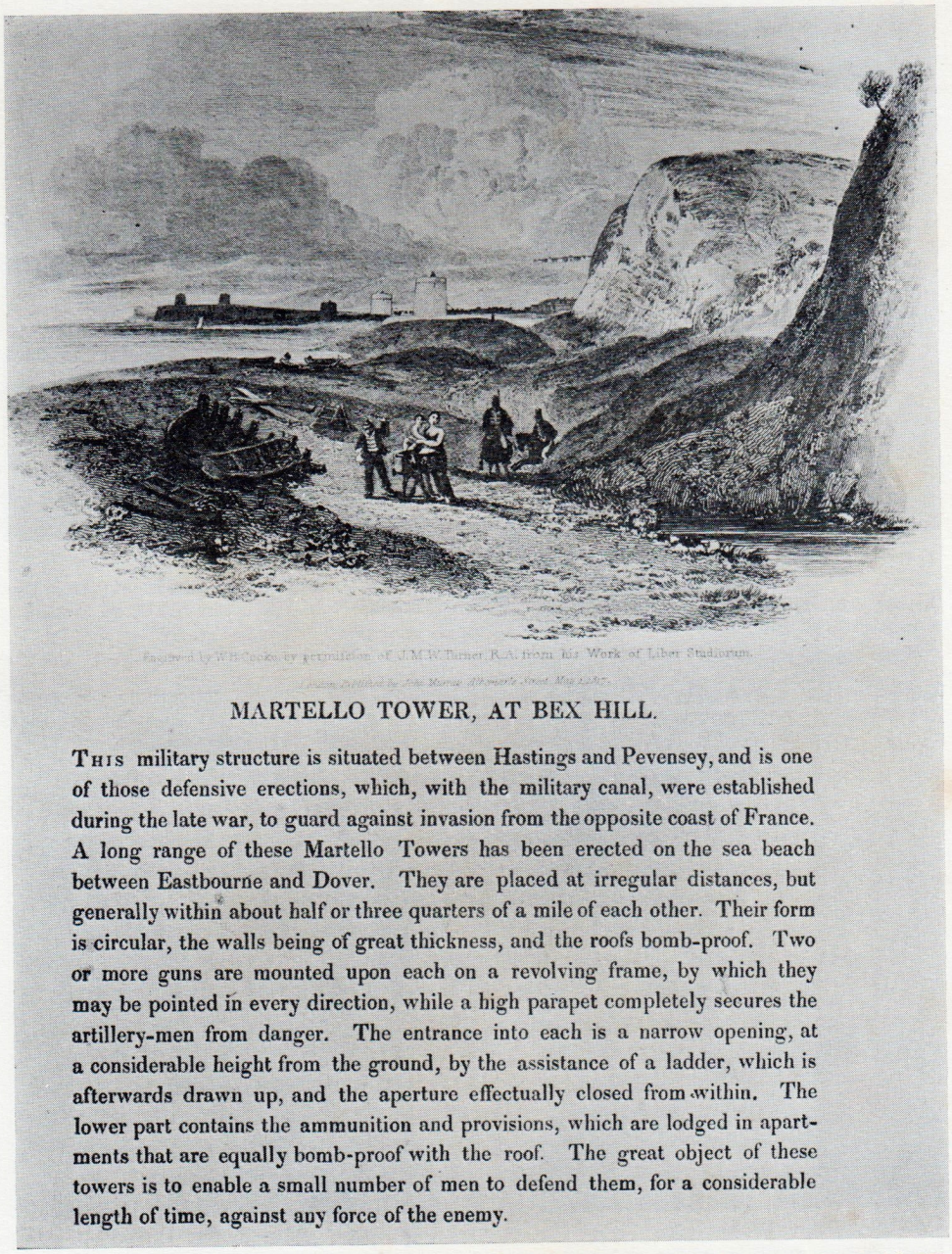
1.—Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Lane, 'father of local government' in Bexhill, whose memorial is in Town Hall Square.

2.—Viscount Cantelupe, 8th Earl De La Warr, who did much to create the high-class late-Victorian resort of Bexhill.



3.—Mr. John Webb who built the East Parade wall in 1883 and afterwards developed much of the town centre west of Sea Road.

4.—Mr. George H. Gray, a noted architect and De La Warr estate agent, who encouraged much of the development east of Sea Road.



Engraved by W.H.Cooke, by permission of J.M.W.Turner, R.A. from his Work of Liber Studiorum.

London, Published by John Murray, Albemarle Street, May 1, 1817.

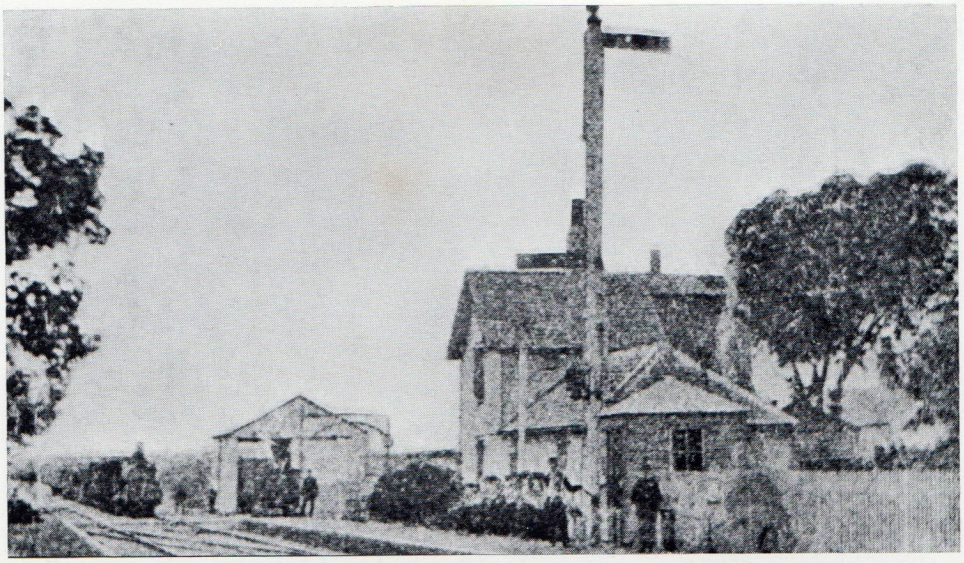
MARTELLO TOWER, AT BEX HILL.

THIS military structure is situated between Hastings and Pevensey, and is one of those defensive erections, which, with the military canal, were established during the late war, to guard against invasion from the opposite coast of France. A long range of these Martello Towers has been erected on the sea beach between Eastbourne and Dover. They are placed at irregular distances, but generally within about half or three quarters of a mile of each other. Their form is circular, the walls being of great thickness, and the roofs bomb-proof. Two or more guns are mounted upon each on a revolving frame, by which they may be pointed in every direction, while a high parapet completely secures the artillery-men from danger. The entrance into each is a narrow opening, at a considerable height from the ground, by the assistance of a ladder, which is afterwards drawn up, and the aperture effectually closed from within. The lower part contains the ammunition and provisions, which are lodged in apartments that are equally bomb-proof with the roof. The great object of these towers is to enable a small number of men to defend them, for a considerable length of time, against any force of the enemy.

5.—A view of some of the Martello towers at Bexhill drawn by the famous artist J. M. W. Turner and published in his 'Liber Studiorum' in 1817, from which the above text is also taken.

6.—The Martello tower and bungalow which formerly stood on Galley Hill, a picture taken about 1890.

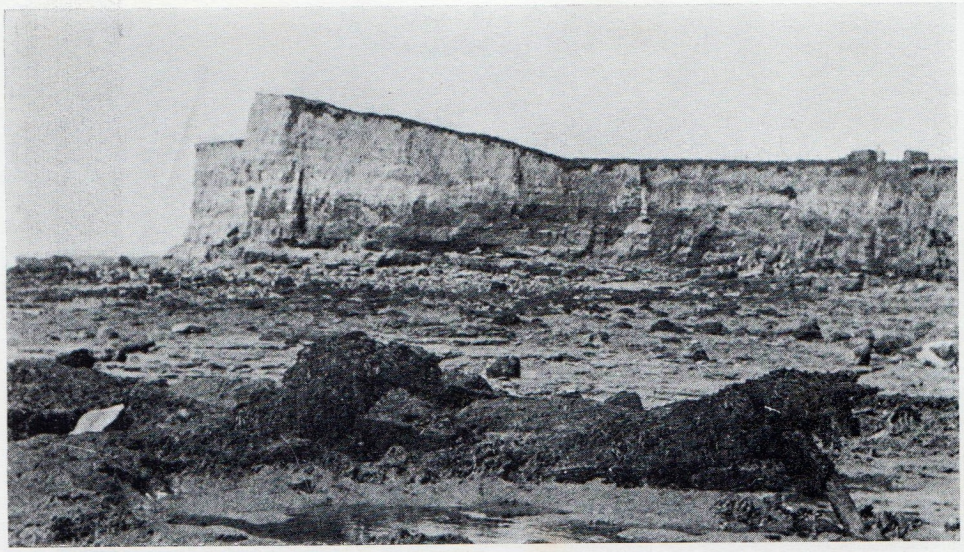
7.—Sidley towards the end of the last century, with the New Inn, still almost unchanged, on the right and the old Sussex public house among buildings on the left.



8.—Bexhill's first station on the Lewes–Bulverhythe railway, opened in 1846 on the north side of the line.

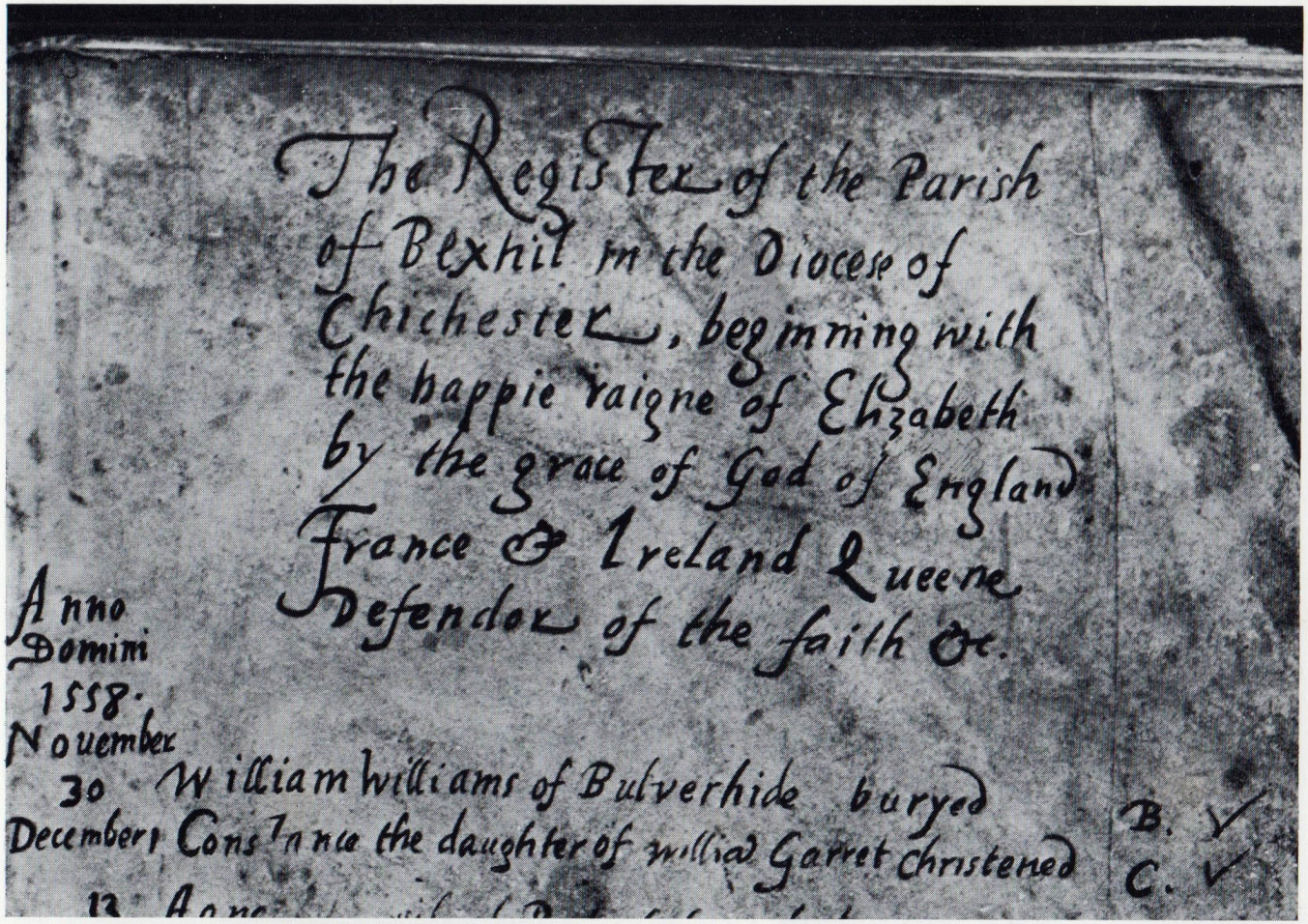
9.—Little Common cross roads before the first world war, showing a portion of the former village pond.

10.—Outside the coastguard station which stood on the Horn, the site of the De La Warr Pavilion: A photograph at the turn of the century when the Marine Hotel (left) was being built on the site of the present Dalmore Court.



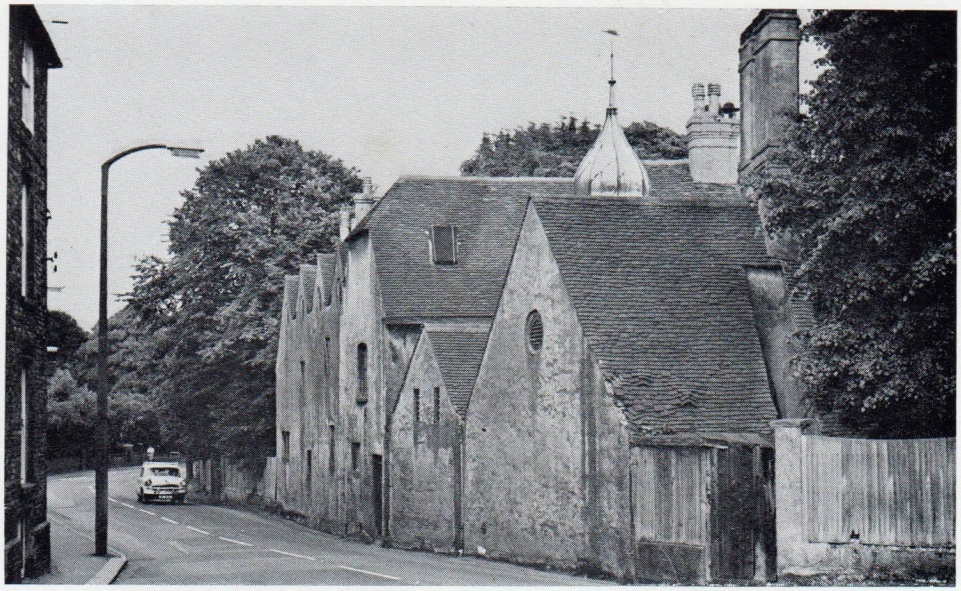
11.—Little Galley Hill from the east, with part of the submerged forest exposed in the foreground in 1925.

12.—A beach scene near the Colonnade before the first world war, with the roof of the former coastguard station in the top left-hand corner.



13.—The first page of the Parish Register of St. Peter's Church dated 1558, the first entry recording the burial of William Williams of Bulverhythe. The title reads "The Register of the Parish of Bexhill in the Diocese of Chichester beginning with the happy reign of Elizabeth by the Grace of God of England, France and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, etc."

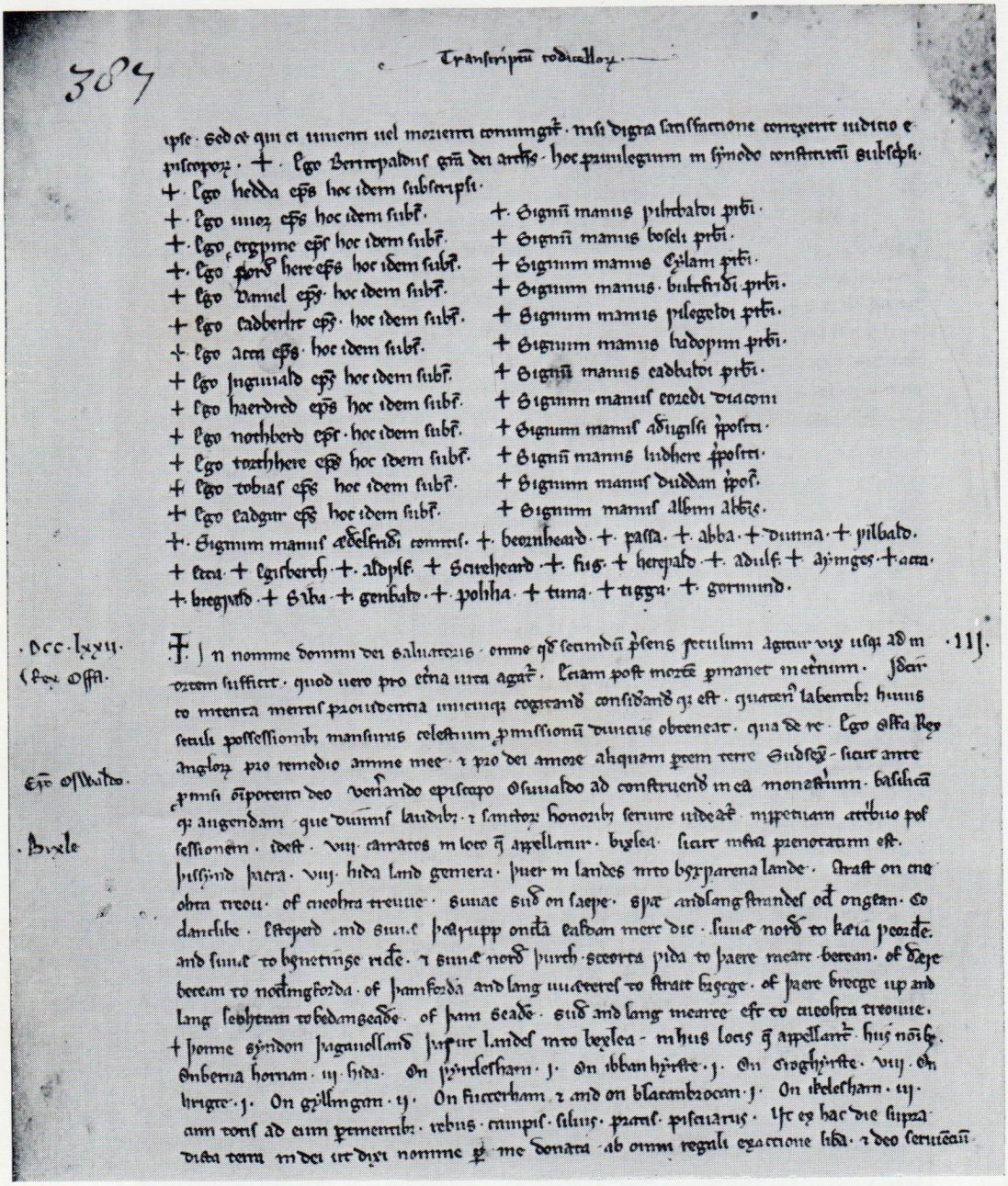
14.—A view of the Manor House, demolished in 1968, from the south west, showing the wing reconstructed by Mrs Neven Du Mont from the ground floor extension made by the 8th Earl De La Warr, and beyond, the south-east wing built by Sir Leicester Harmsworth.



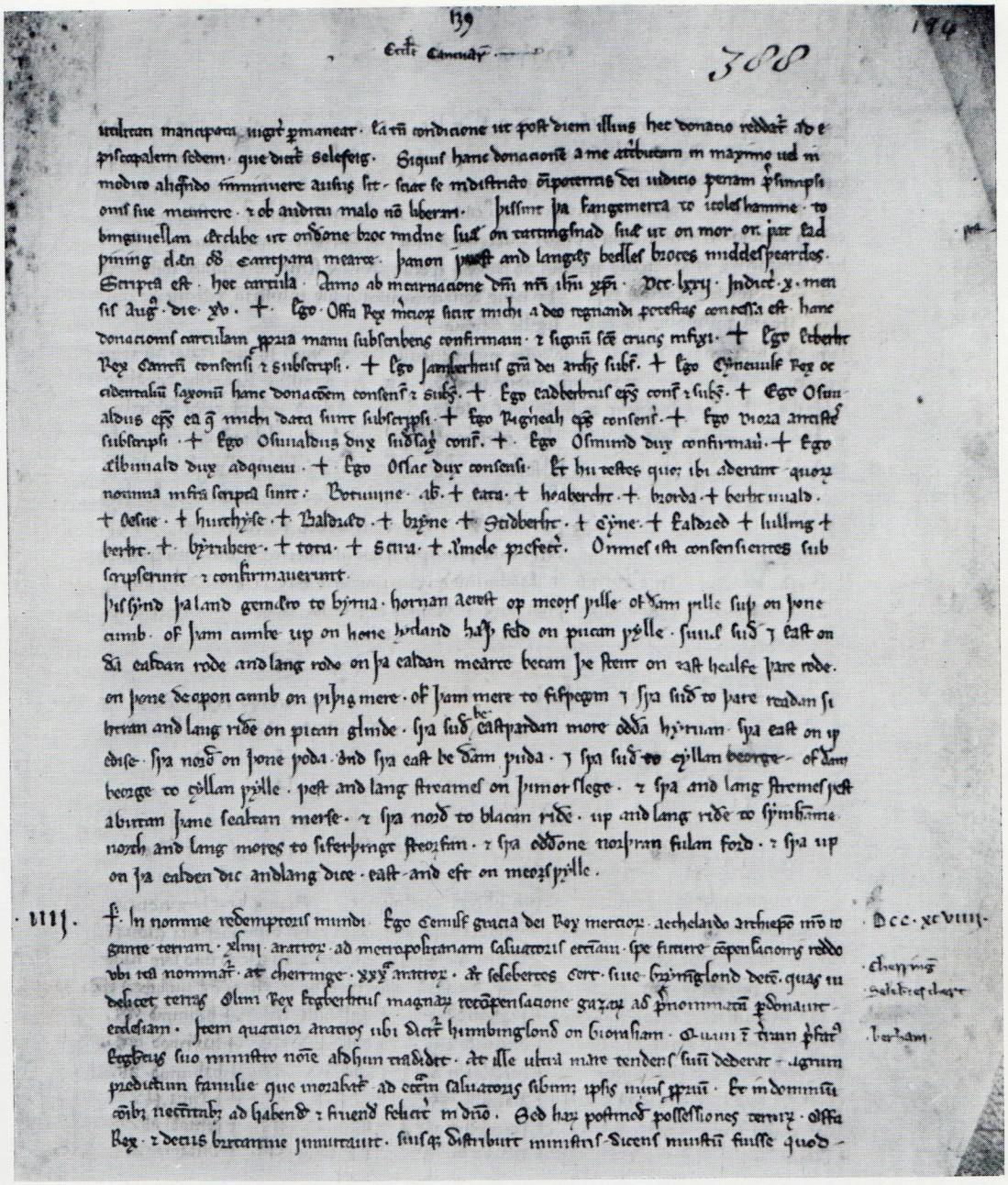
15.—The De La Warr Road frontage of the Manor House demolished in 1968 in the reconstruction of the gardens by the Corporation.

16.—Old Town forge (demolished 1947) and South Lodge, taken down in 1968; this picture dates from the early 1890s.

17.—The celebrated Old Town walnut tree as it was about 1890, part of the Bell Hotel showing on the left. The stump of the tree was removed in 1921.



18.—A reproduction (reduced in size) from the medieval copy in Lambeth Palace Library of the charter granted by King Offa II of Mercia in AD 772 to found and endow St. Peter's Church. The text of the

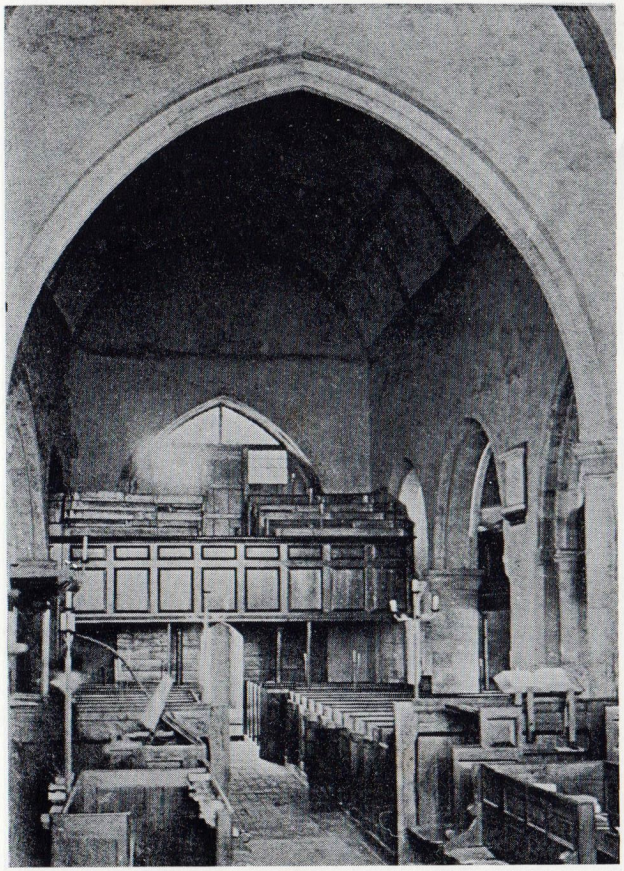


charter is in Latin, with the boundaries of the grants of land defined in Anglo-Saxon. This grant marks the beginning of the recorded history of Bexhill and from it has developed the borough of today.

19.—The cycling boom of the 1890s led to the construction of a special boulevard along the East Parade in 1896. The chimney is that of the former Bexhill gasworks in Ashdown Road.

20.—The original Holmwood boys school, Hastings Road, the first independent school in the town, and now part of Charters Towers girls school.

21.—'Squire' Brook (centre) and the Bexhill Harriers, a pack of the old Southern hound which hunted locally from 1785 until disbanded in 1915. The photograph is dated 1883.



22. — The west end of St. Peter's Church before the restoration in 1878 when the galleries were removed.

23. — St. Barnabas' Church, built to serve the growing seaside resort, during its construction in 1890.

CHAPTER NINE

Anglican Church

THE PARISH OF ST. PETER'S exerted an immense influence on the development of Bexhill. This was not only religious: As we have seen, the parish vestry formed much of the origin of the town's local government; social services sprang from the work of its ministers and laity, and the local elementary educational system not only derived from the building of St. Peter's schools in Holliers Hill in 1853 but remained (with the later exception of the Roman Catholic school) entirely under Church of England control until the first Down schools were opened by the Bexhill Education Committee in 1907. No School Board was ever formed for the town under the Education Act of 1870. Every Anglican parish in the borough was originally part of St. Peter's whose incumbent is still acknowledged as *primus inter pares* among his colleagues.

ST. PETER'S

Before turning to external aspects of church influence and development, however, some reference is necessary to St. Peter's Church itself, although it is not proposed to presume on the admirable account published by Canon Earwaker, and which has been brought up to date by his successor Canon M. D. Townroe. The little surviving stonework of the original Saxon church, at the west end of the nave, is now concealed by plaster, but the church possesses a beautifully carved 8th-century stone which may have been the lid of a reliquary containing the relics of saints. The Normans added a west tower to the church and later aisles to the Saxon nave. Early in the 13th century the building was extended eastward in Early English style, the old chancel being taken into the nave and a new chancel built. This was in the time of Bishop Ralph Neville, who was not only a noted ecclesiastic and church builder, but Lord Chancellor of the realm. Later in the 13th century additions were made on the south side of the church, but these were removed in a large-scale reconstruction during 1878.

In the first half of the 15th century a north chapel was added in Perpendicular style to the chancel and it remains almost intact, though now entering into the east

end of the nave. This is the Batesford chantry chapel, erected under the will of Lady Joan Brenchley of Pebsham in memory of her parents and husband Sir William, a Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, who died in 1446. She bequeathed a similar chantry to Canterbury Cathedral but this was demolished in 1787, the site now being marked by a plaque in the nave. The endowment of the Bexhill chantry came from Chantry Farm, later known as Church Farm, and the house of which is the present rectory. Chantry chapels ceased at the Dissolution of the Monasteries in Henry VIII's reign, but that at Bexhill escaped despoliation and was restored by Thomas Pye, rector from 1589 to 1609, who used it as a 'schole house', an enterprise for which he is justly remembered. He was buried in the chantry chapel with which his name is so much associated. In the 18th century a gallery was installed at the west end of the church to increase the seating accommodation, lighted by dormer windows, and these remained until the alterations of 1878, together with the 'squire's pew' in the south aisle which was approached by an external stairway.

A notable rector during the 18th century was William Ashburnham, a kinsman of the earls of Ashburnham, who became Dean of Chichester in 1741 and was bishop of the diocese from 1754 until 1798, despite which he continued to hold the living of Bexhill until 1757. In the last decade of the century and until his death in 1827 (caused by a chill he contracted when officiating at the funeral of the Duke of York, the second son of King George III), the rector was George Pelham, a son of the 1st Earl of Chichester and who became successively Bishop of Bristol, Exeter and Lincoln. His duties at Bexhill were discharged by a curate among whose entries in the parish registers during the Napoleonic wars are many references to the King's German Legion whose depot was established here.

In 1876, when the Rev. C. L. S. Clarke was instituted rector, the expansion of Bexhill had begun chiefly on the slopes bordering Holliers Hill and there was every indication that the growth would become rapid. The new rector quickly saw that the church could not meet the increased needs of the parish and the following year the Vestry approved a £4,000 scheme, prepared by the distinguished ecclesiastical architect, William Butterfield, to remove the high pews, gallery and dormer windows, widen and lengthen the south aisle, further extend the chancel, adding two bays to the nave, renew the tower battlements and strengthen the foundations. All this was done and the completed work consecrated in July 1879. Canon Clarke, as he became, is remembered not only for initiating this great undertaking, but for the help which he and his devoted wife gave in the typhoid epidemic which swept the Old Town in 1880 (leading directly to the formation of a Local Board of Health), and for paying for the building of the first part of St. Barnabas' Church on a site given by the 7th Earl De La Warr.

Despite the building of this and other Anglican churches, however, the accommodation at St. Peter's continued to be insufficient, services having to be

duplicated, and in 1906, during the incumbency of Canon T. T. Churton, who was also Archdeacon of Hastings, a new north aisle and an addition to the south aisle were built, and these and other improvements consecrated by Bishop Charles Ridgeway (1908–1919) whose first diocesan visit this was since his enthronement in Chichester Cathedral a few days earlier. During the rectorship of Canon Godfrey Bell, from 1941 to 1953 when he died suddenly, the fabric of St. Peter's was renovated and the fine mural painting in the nave, showing St. Wilfrid and St. Richard, 'the two great Shepherds of the Church in Sussex' (to quote Canon Earwaker), executed by Alan Sorrell. Canon Earwaker's incumbency was marked by the 400th anniversary of the start of the church registers, which are complete from 1558, and the commemoration in June 1953 of the 700th anniversary of the death of St. Richard. Since the advent of Canon Townroe in 1959 the church has raised some £25,000 for further restoration, including the repair of death watch beetle ravages, cleaning the finely painted chancel ceiling, and building a choir vestry on the north side. In 1965, at the invitation of the Rector, a Roman Catholic priest preached at St. Peter's for the first time since the Reformation.

Although the church was founded in the 8th century, nothing is known of the Saxon priests, but Geoffrey and Roger are mentioned as clerks in Domesday Book and the record of incumbents is practically complete from the early 13th century. Until 1516, when the tithes were confiscated by the Crown, the priest bore the title of rector. The ancient tithe of one-tenth of the produce of land for the maintenance of the clergy and ecclesiastical purposes had been given state recognition in Saxon times. In 1836 an Act of Parliament provided for annual monetary payments, or a tithe rent charge based on corn prices, a practice later redeemable by arrangement with the Board of Agriculture. Historically a rector is an incumbent who personally received the tithe payments, and a vicar an incumbent either of a new parish which had never had tithes, or of one where the old tithes had been appropriated by a monastery or college which became responsible for the church services. Tithes were abolished in 1936 so that, as Canon Earwaker records, the distinction is now 'only one of history'. From 1516 when the ancient tithe payments ceased at St. Peter's, until 1860 when they were restored to the church, the parish priest had the title of vicar. At the time of their restoration the vicar was the Rev. H. W. Simpson who was thereafter rector until his death in 1876. His 36 years ministry at Bexhill is the longest in the history of the parish, but his son, Canon J. H. Simpson, who was a curate at St. Mark's Church under his father, and then the first rector of the new parish there from 1857, served altogether for more than 50 years until his retirement in 1905.

It has been recounted how in Norman times the Prebend of Bexhill and Bulverhythe, founded by Count Robert of Eu as part of the collegiate church at Hastings Castle, had received the gift of a house of residence from Robert Creol, and which eventually became the old manor house but was originally the house of the parish

priest. A later rectory stood on the site of the present St. Peter's Community Centre, but early in the 19th century a new rectory was built north of the church and occupied as such until the second world war, when it was sold and later became a nursing home. The property, with its handsome park-like grounds, was bought in 1964 by the National Advertising Benevolent Society whose Peterhouse homes now occupy the site. As already noted, the present rectory was formerly the house of the old Church Farm which formed the endowment of the chantry chapel in St. Peter's Church before the Reformation.

A unique record of Anglican Church life in Bexhill is comprised in the volumes of St. Peter's parish magazine which dates from 1874. As there was no local newspaper for another 13 years many of the earlier references are of great value to the historian.

The name of the original Good Shepherd mission hut at the foot of the Down is preserved in the church which forms the upper storey of the Malet Memorial Hall at the corner of Belle Hill and London Road. It was erected by Lady Ermyntrude Malet in memory of her husband Sir Edward, the famous diplomat, who lived at Wrestwood, Hastings Road (now St. Mary's School) and was one of the first men in Bexhill to own a motor car. Lady Ermyntrude, a daughter of the 9th Duke of Bedford, was a cousin of the 8th Earl De La Warr, and her husband was one of the godfathers to the future 9th Earl. The Church of the Good Shepherd was dedicated by Bishop Ridgeway in October 1913, and on the same day he opened Sidley Church Institute, the £600 cost of which had been met anonymously by a lady in appreciation of the church Retreats which in those days found much support among holidaymakers in the town.

After the formation of St. Barnabas' parish the demand for church accommodation to the north, on the eastern side of St. Peter's parish, increased with the gradual development of the town there, and particularly the establishment of a number of independent schools in the Hastings Road area. For the pupils of these, church attendance was customary on Sundays and the uniformed 'crocodiles' on their way to and from places of worship were part of the town scene.

In consequence a site for a church was given by the Dunn family, for long connected with the religious and civic life of the town. The architect, Mr. J. V. Mendham, designed a building in Decorated style and the foundation stone of St. Michael and All Angels was laid on that saint's day in 1929 by the then Mayor (Councillor, afterwards Alderman A. Turner Laing). The church was dedicated by the Bishop of Lewes the following May and consecrated in October 1933 by Bishop G. K. A. Bell (1929-1958) an occasion which marked the last public appearance of Canon H. Maycock who had succeeded Archdeacon Churton in 1915 and greatly encouraged the St. Michael's Church scheme. In 1961 a church hall was completed, a venture carried through entirely by the voluntary labour of the parishioners.

ST. MARK'S

The separation of St. Mark's from the parish of St. Peter's was the first step in the Anglican division of the town into its present six parishes. The first portion of St. Mark's Church had been built in 1842, largely of material from the No. 42 Martello Tower demolished at Bulverhythe, and which was brought by sea to the beach at the bottom of Cooden Sea Lane (now Road) and thence transported by cart to the church site, to provide which the old roadway had been diverted. The need for a church at the western end of the parish of Bexhill had been indicated at the time of the appointment of the Rev. W. H. Simpson to the living of St. Peter's two years earlier, and the site was given by Sir Godfrey Webster, owner of Battle Abbey, whose family had acquired the Abbey estate and with it the manor of Barnhorn which had been associated with the abbey from medieval times. Among donors who subscribed to the building of St. Mark's were the Commissioners of Customs who at first required that seats should be reserved for the coastguardmen, but on being informed that the church would be free for all this request was withdrawn.

St. Mark's was first served by curates of St. Peter's, and the separate parish was not created until 1857 when it was described as 'the district chapelry of St. Mark's with a perpetual curatior', but 10 years later the Ecclesiastical Commissioners ordered that the living should be a rectory. The original building of St. Mark's was enlarged in 1858 by the extension of the chancel, and in 1885 by that of a south aisle and an addition to the nave. In 1931 the Lady Chapel and a new vestry were added, a north aisle completed in 1963 and a new porch in 1970. The church institute was built in 1912.

Canon J. H. Simpson, who came as curate in 1852, resided at Signal House (later renamed Kewhurst House) which was one of the old telegraph stations of the coastguards and still retains the look-out tower. In 1879 he built the rectory which was bought by the Corporation in 1964 and demolished to provide part of a site for elderly people's flatlets, a scheme that resulted in the opening of Alexander Court in 1970. When Canon Simpson retired in 1905 (he died 10 years later at the age of 89), presentations to him on behalf of the parish were made by Lord Brassey who rode on horseback from his mansion of Normanhurst for the occasion. The rector's acknowledgment included a valuable survey of the long history of the district and he also recalled that 'all his children, 11 in number, had attended St. Mark's Sunday School, sitting side by side with their fellow parishioners, and they had learned the same lessons and been subject to the same rules and discipline, and had also taken their parts in the choir'. Canon E. Mortlock, Vicar of St. Barnabas', wrote at the time: 'It needs to be an old resident indeed to recall the coming of the tall and well-knit curate to Bexhill, who did not appeal less to the laymen of his day because he came accompanied by stories of swimming exploits and prowess as an oar in the second Trinity boat'.

In 1866, on a site given by the Duke of Devonshire, the tiny church of St. James, which also served for many years as a schoolroom, was built at The Sluice (Normans Bay) to cater for the coastguards and troops of the then Coast Brigade stationed in the vicinity and their families. Hitherto services had been held in the guardroom or a room in the coastguard officer's house. The Coast Brigade had a number of units along the south-east coast and formed part of the defence forces at a time of strained relations with the France of Napoleon III. St. James' Church, which was in St. Mark's parish, was closed in 1967 and the proceeds of the sale of the building and site were given towards the cost of a new church at Pevensey. In 1970 the use of the old St. James' Church was granted to St. Paul's Free Church of England.

ST. BARNABAS'

After St. Mark's, the next parish to be detached from St. Peter's was that of St. Barnabas', created in June 1891 and which recalled Bexhill's ancient link with Bulverhythe, for on that side it was described as 'all that part of the parish of Bexhill bounded on the east by the reputed parish of St. Mary Bulverhythe'. During the later years of his incumbency at St. Peter's, Canon Clarke had become increasingly concerned about the lack of church accommodation in the rapidly-growing new town between the railway and the sea, and soon after he retired in 1888 he donated £6,000 for the building of a church, for which the 7th Earl De La Warr gave an acre of ground at the corner of Sea Road and Cantelupe Road.

St. Barnabas' was designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield, architect to the Bank of England, in Gothic Revival style; the foundation stone was laid in July 1890 by Mrs. Clarke, and the church consecrated in July the following year by Bishop Richard Durnford (1870–1895), who at the age of 88 was the oldest member of the Bench of Bishops. Vigorous to the last, he had as a youth swum across the fast-flowing River Rhine at Cologne. The church was enlarged in 1909 by the addition of a south aisle in accordance with plans prepared several years earlier by Sir Arthur Blomfield and Sons (Sir Arthur himself had died in 1899). The cost was met with a £12,000 legacy from Miss Evelyne Clarke, daughter of the donor of the original building.

The first vicar was the Rev. Edward E. Mortlock who had been one of the curates of St. Peter's. He held the living until 1926 and was a formidable personality in the religious and social work of Bexhill. His latter concern led to the appointment of a parish nurse, one of the first attempts to provide a service of this kind in the town, and from which the Bexhill Nursing Association, which became defunct in 1970, developed. A temperance advocate, he was renowned for his objections to the grant of new liquor licences by the licensing justices, and in times of unemployment before the first world war he led a movement which established a labour yard. The old St. Barnabas' Cricket Club, one of the origins of the Town club today, developed through his encouragement and he formed a strong corps of the

Church Lads Brigade. When he retired it was said of him that '40 years ago he came to Bexhill and found little more than a beach; he had known it from the time when it was a baby and he left it a strong and growing young thing upon whose life he had left an indelible impression and a lasting influence'.

His successor, Canon B. H. Davies, who remained until the second world war, was also a man of independence and initiative. A pioneer motorist and accomplished journalist, he contributed to *The New Statesman and Nation* under the pen-name of 'R. E. Davidson', and was widely read as 'Ixion' of *The Motor Cycle*. Under his leadership St. Barnabas' adopted and greatly helped a poor Stockton-on-Tees parish in the depression of the 1930s. An address he gave to Bexhill Rotary Club started the movement which resulted in 1933 in the formation of the town's Central Aid Council, later renamed the Council of Social Service. The first broadcast of a Bexhill religious service was made from his church. During Canon Davies' incumbency St. Barnabas' parish was divided by the formation of the conventional district of West Bexhill based on St. Andrew's Church (which had been founded as a mission of St. Barnabas' in 1900), and he initiated the raising of money to build St. Augustine's Church of which parish the conventional district became part in 1934.

The departure of Canon Davies in 1940 left St. Barnabas' without a priest, and Canon Bell, who became Rector of St. Peter's the following year, assumed responsibility for the parish, later appointing a priest-in-charge until the Rev. D. H. Pilkington became vicar in 1943. This had to be approved by King George VI as, due to the long interval since Canon Davies' resignation, the presentation of the living had reverted first to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and then to the Crown. After the war St. Barnabas' adopted a devastated parish in Hamburg, one of the first examples of church liaison with the former enemy, and which created a notable impression.

The first people's warden at St. Barnabas' was Viscount Cantelupe, afterwards the 8th Earl De La Warr, whose father gave the site for the church, but the most notable layman in the history of the parish was Mr. F. E. Poulton who in more than 60 years held all the lay offices and was for 30 years headmaster of the St. Barnabas' boys school in Reginald Road which closed during the second world war. In the late Victorian and Edwardian years when Bexhill had many visitors of distinction, fashionable congregations were the rule at St. Barnabas' which was near the sea-front hotels. The church records note the attendance on Whit-Sunday 1896 of the Duke and Duchess of Teck, parents of Queen Mary, who were the guests of Earl De La Warr at the Manor House. The next day the Duchess opened the Kursaal entertainment pavilion on the De La Warr Parade.

The 15-roomed Victorian vicarage built by Canon Mortlock was destroyed in an air raid which did much damage to the centre of Bexhill in May 1942. Some of the church windows were blown out, including one to the memory of Dr. J. P.

Wills, the first vicar's warden from 1891 until 1913. The vicarage site was opened as a public sheltered garden in 1965.

As Bexhill expanded westwards in the 1890s the need arose for another church in St. Barnabas' parish which then extended to the boundary of St. Mark's. The result was the mission church of St. Andrew's in Wickham Avenue, designed by Mr. J. B. Wall. The foundations were laid in January 1899 and the church dedicated in March the following year. In 1912 new vestry accommodation was added, in 1955 a church room, and in 1971 again new vestries. After the first world war, expansion largely based on the axis of Cooden Drive made further church accommodation desirable, and as a preliminary step St. Andrew's became in 1931 the focal point of a newly-constituted conventional district of West Bexhill which comprised the western part of St. Barnabas' parish from Sackville Road, and became part of the parish of St. Augustine with the consecration of that church in 1934. Following the second world war difficulties which arose from the shortage of clergy in St. Augustine's parish led to the creation of the small conventional district of St. Andrew's which includes the west side of Sackville Road, Cornwall Road and Park Road. A priest-in-charge is appointed and licensed by the bishop of the diocese, and the church has been served devotedly by retired clergy.

ST. STEPHEN'S

After St. Barnabas' the next division of St. Peter's parish was the formation of that of St. Stephen's in 1900. In 1885 Canon Clarke had opened a mission hall dedicated to the Good Shepherd, consisting of an iron hut on the site of the present Sports Centre in Little Common Road. With the growth of the town in the next decade Mr. J. Lambert Walker, of Woodsgate, agreed to pay for a clergyman to come there from St. Leonards to conduct two services each Sunday, but Canon Clarke regretfully recorded that 'the people in the immediate neighbourhood of the Down Mission Hall continue to disappoint by not using the building erected for their special benefit'. Mr. Walker therefore gave an acre of land from his estate at the top of the Down and £10,000 to build and endow a church. A retired merchant, who had travelled widely, and among whose memories was that of seeing Queen Victoria's Coronation procession in 1838, he had come to Bexhill in 1875. He was one of those who campaigned for better local government at the time of the typhoid epidemic of 1880 and was a benefactor to the town in the early days of its expansion, building four almshouses in Crowmere Avenue and a club for working men, opened in 1879, which still forms part of the Sidley Working Men's Club.

The architect of St. Stephen's Church, which was erected in Early English style, was Mr. Henry Ward; the foundation stone was laid by Mr. Walker's daughters in October 1898 and the church consecrated by Bishop Ernest Wilberforce (1895–1908) in June 1900. The presentation of the first incumbent was made by Mr. Walker, but since then the living has been in the gift of the bishop of the

diocese. The first vicar was the Rev. E. H. Leale (who was licensed to carry out clerical duties until the parish was formed and he was instituted and inducted) and he held the living for 35 years. Mr. Leale, who died in 1958 at the age of 95, recalled at the golden jubilee of St. Stephen's in 1950: 'We had to begin *de novo*. There was an unfinished church in a very thinly populated district; the roads were in a deplorable condition, yet in wet weather they were better than the pathways'. During the first world war Mr. Leale was chaplain to the Canadian troops at Cooden camp and used the old iron mission hut at the foot of the Down as a canteen. For many years he was one of Bexhill's members on the Battle Board of Guardians of which he became vice-chairman. He was a keen wireless experimenter and one of the first in Bexhill to build a transmitter.

The original design for St. Stephen's Church included a spire which was never erected. The first time the bell in the tower was tolled for a death was at the passing of Queen Victoria in January 1901. An electronic peal of bells was given to the church in 1946. The vicarage was built in 1907 and the church hall, which dates from 1937, was one of the first undertakings of Mr. Leale's successor, the Rev. G. Haydn Evans, a Welshman of outstanding character and vigour whose ministry, until he retired in 1958, is still remembered with much affection.

ALL SAINTS'

After St. Stephen's the parochial pattern of Bexhill remained unchanged for thirty years except for the creation of the conventional district of West Bexhill, based on St. Andrew's Church and which became the basis of the parish of St. Augustine's. The next new parish carved out of St. Peter's was that of All Saints'. In 1865 a church school had been opened in the hamlet of Sidley and which was also used for religious services. In 1885 it was succeeded as a place of worship by what was known as the Iron Church, later used as an institute, and finally removed to a new site to become a garage. The development of the area, accelerated by the construction of the Bexhill West to Crowhurst branch railway line which had a station at Sidley, led in 1905 to the start of a fund to build a permanent church. The plans of Mr. G. S. Streatfeild, brother of a St. Leonards clergyman, were accepted, building began in May 1909, and in the following October Bishop Ridgeway dedicated the nave, the first ordinary services being held in the church on All Saints' Day, two days later. The leader of this enterprise was the priest-in-charge, the Rev. C. J. Wigan, one of the curates of St. Peter's, and when he died in 1937 the tribute was paid that 'he may be said to be the founder of our church'.

At first All Saints' comprised only the nave, built after the style of an old Sussex barn, and plans to complete the building were deferred during the first world war. Revived in 1921, they were fulfilled under a generous bequest in the will of Mr. J. D. Atchison, of Preston Farm. A notable figure in the public life of Bexhill in the early days of the 'new town', he became the doyen of the Battle

Board of Guardians and was a good friend to the workhouse inmates. The church was completed by additions which included the tower and chancel of which the foundation stone was laid in February 1927, and the enlarged church was consecrated by Bishop Bell appropriately on All Saints' Day 1930. The parish was constituted by an Order-in-Council in December that year and the Rev. J. Powell, who had been priest-in-charge, was instituted to the new living in January 1931. Much esteemed in the parish, he was president of the Sidley Working Men's Club.

ST. AUGUSTINE'S

After the first world war, residential building in the vicinity of Cooden Drive and to the north towards Little Common Road made the erection of yet another church desirable, and a diocesan commission suggested a site near Collington Halt. Land was bought in nearby Sutherland Avenue and it was decided that the new church should be a temporary building in a conventional district formed out of the western part of St. Barnabas' parish. In 1929, however, Bishop Bell, who had succeeded Bishop Winfrid Burrows (1919–1929) in the See of Chichester, decided to encourage the building of a permanent church and invited the Rev. H. A. Thomas to come from Cornwall to be a curate of St. Barnabas' and to prepare the way for a new parish of West Bexhill. Mr. Thomas, who in the course of a long ministerial career was a chaplain to the Forces in all three Services (he was with the Gallipoli expedition), accordingly became curate at St. Andrew's, then still a mission church of St. Barnabas', in conjunction with whose vicar, Canon Davies, he did much to raise money for building a new church.

Progress was such that in 1931 the conventional district of West Bexhill was formed, legally independent of St. Barnabas' which, however, continued to help towards the new building. The next year the Sutherland Avenue land was sold and a site acquired on the south side of Cooden Drive where the Canadian Army had had a trench warfare school during the first world war. Mr. W. H. Randall Blacking was the architect for the new church but it was possible to carry out only part of his scheme and the proposed tower has never been added. The foundation stone was laid by the Bishop of Lewes (Rt. Rev. H. M. Hordern) in May 1933 and soon afterwards an anonymous gift enabled a second bay to be proceeded with, the church then remaining in this state, with a temporary west wall, until 1961.

St. Augustine's, so named at the suggestion of Mr. Thomas who became the first vicar, was consecrated by Bishop Bell in July 1934, the service being amplified to a large congregation in the grounds and to the neighbourhood by the late Mr. F. A. Boggis, whose pioneer work in this direction was a feature of the inter-war years in Bexhill. The parish of St. Augustine, comprising the conventional district of West Bexhill and a portion of St. Mark's parish, was constituted by an Order-in-Council in July 1934, St. Andrew's becoming a daughter church within it. The Anglican parochial pattern which exists today was thus established except for the

creation of the conventional district of St. Andrew's within St. Augustine's parish in 1950 and a modification of the boundary between St. Mark's and St. Augustine's parishes in 1958.

For nearly four years during the second world war, after Mr. Thomas's successor had resigned the living in 1940, the church was without a vicar and the Rector of St. Peter's assumed responsibility for the parish. In 1944, however, there was appointed Canon J. M. Swift who not only revived parochial life, but was much esteemed in the newspaper world on account of his work for the Press and Publications Board of the Church Assembly. A notable cricketer who had played for Cheshire and for Lancashire 2nd XI, his sudden death in 1949 was a great loss to the parish, diocese and the Church in general. Early in the incumbency of the Rev. E. A. Stone St. Augustine's undertook the completion of the vestry block to make a new church room, and this was dedicated by Bishop Bell in May 1956. Three years later there was begun the scheme to complete the church, the architect being Mr. H. Hubbard Ford. The work began in February 1961 and the foundation stone was laid the following June by the Bishop of Lewes (Rt. Rev. J. H. L. Morrell) with the trowel used by Bishop Hordern at the original stone-laying 28 years earlier. The completed church was consecrated by the Bishop of Chichester (Dr. R. P. Wilson) in May 1963, and the following July a new organ was dedicated, bringing the total cost of the completion work to some £40,000, all of which was raised by the parish.

A scheme particularly associated with St. Augustine's was the building in the Close, by the Church of England Pensions Board, of four bungalows for retired clergy, and these were opened in December 1957 by Lord Hawke, chairman of the Chichester Diocesan Board of Finance.

Until 1931 the Anglican parishes in Bexhill formed part of the Rural Deanery of Hastings, but in that year the Battle and Bexhill Rural Deanery was constituted with Canon Maycock, then Rector of St. Peter's, Bexhill, as the first Rural Dean. In 1970 a Deanery Synod was established under the Synodical Government Measure of the Church of England the previous year, the Rural Dean, Canon Townroe, becoming the first chairman.

The original burial ground of the parish of Bexhill was, of course, the graveyard of St. Peter's Church. During the Napoleonic wars, however, a burial ground was opened in what is now Barrack Road for men of the King's German Legion and other troops stationed in that locality. After 1815, when the military had vacated the depot, the burial ground was handed over to the See of Chichester and the bishop granted it to St. Peter's Church which used it as an extension to the old graveyard.

With the growth of the town further burial accommodation was required and the cemetery at Clinch Green was opened by the Urban Council in 1901, being consecrated by the Bishop of Chichester on a snowy January day when, to quote a

contemporary account, 'the clergy and councillors were conveyed in carriages and enveloped in blankets and wraps, but probably they were more susceptible to the arctic elements than those who elected to do the two-mile journey on foot'. At that time the Nonconformist churches objected to a rate charge for the consecration of the cemetery in accordance with the rites of the Church of England, and eventually the whole cost of £30 was paid by the Established Church. In 1960 the cemetery was enlarged and a lawn extension consecrated.

About the same time the Barrack Road burial ground was finally closed for use and after negotiations with the local authority handed over to the Town Council for use as a public open space, but a number of headstones of historical interest were preserved there, some memorials of once well-known local families and one recording the death of Percy Bysshe Shelley Leigh Hunt, son of the Leigh Hunt whose friendship with the famous poet (a son of Sussex), he commemorated in the names given to his son who died at Bexhill in 1899. The early sectarian differences which marked religious life, illustrated by the controversy over the Clinch Green cemetery consecration, have happily been succeeded by that fellowship and goodwill which has been a feature of church life in the town for many years and includes all branches of the Christian faith. Notable in 1946 was the formation of the Bexhill Council of Churches, largely piloted by Canon Bell who became the first chairman.

CHAPTER TEN

Roman Catholicism

BEFORE THE INSTITUTE OF CHARITY within the Roman Catholic Church was granted permission to open a mission at Bexhill in 1891 the town was in a Catholic parish which extended from Eastbourne in the west to Lydd, on Romney Marsh, in the east, and inland as far as Wadhurst. It was ministered to for more than 30 years by Father Foy who retired to Bexhill and was a valued friend of the new church in the town. He was a famous controversialist and caused consternation at the general election of 1880 when he transferred his support from the Liberal to the Conservative party.

The Bexhill mission was established by Father Lockhart who had been one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement with Cardinal Newman. Land was purchased in Sea Road between the railway and what later became Magdalen Road; plans for a clergy house and school-church were approved by the Local Board in September 1892, and the mission opened in July the following year. The buildings comprised the priests' house (the present presbytery) and the school-church dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene which was extended in 1936 and continued in use as a school until the Roman Catholic primary school was opened at Nazareth House in 1961.

To meet the needs of the growing Catholic community the present church of St. Mary Magdalene was designed by Mr. Arthur Young, of London, who had been the architect for the presbytery and what is now St. Mary Magdalene hall. In Early Decorated style the new church was described at the time as 'practically a copy of the church at Alfriston', well known as the 'cathedral of the Downs'. The foundation stone was laid in December 1906 and the church opened in October the following year in the presence of the Bishop of Southwark (in which Roman Catholic diocese Bexhill then was) and the Bishop of Salford who was an annual visitor to the town. The Mayor (Councillor J. M. Glover) and Corporation attended in civic state. When the church became free of debt in 1913 an impressive four-hour service of consecration was held in September that year, the two bishops again attending. The same day Mrs. Neven Du Mont entertained the local Catholic community at

the Manor House where 'each person bent reverently on one knee and kissed the bishop's ring'. Her husband, who died in 1909, had painted 'The Crucifixion' which hangs in the church. A baptistry was added to the church in 1961 and two years later the west porch, whose fine blending with the main fabric was greatly admired. In 1964, following a Vatican decision, Mass was celebrated at the church in English for the first time.

In June 1965 the Roman Catholic parish of Bexhill became part of a new diocese of Arundel and Brighton which comprises the county of Sussex and that part of Surrey not in the Greater London Council area. The St. Mary Magdalene memorial at the corner of Sea Road and Magdalen Road was the first public war memorial to be erected in Bexhill after the first world war and was designed by Mr. G. H. Gray who was mayor of the borough at the time. Agent to the Bexhill estate of the De La Warr family for 30 years, he was also the architect of St. George's Presbyterian Church in Cantelupe Road.

The Roman Catholic church at Little Common, dedicated to St. Martha, was inspired by the efforts of Father Edmund Hobson, parish priest at Bexhill for many years. The architect was Mr. Marshall Wood, and the foundation stone was laid in August 1939 by the Bishop of Pella, assistant to the Bishop of Southwark. When war broke out in September that year permission had to be obtained from the Ministry of Works to continue the building, and the church was opened unofficially in 1940. During the war it was used not only by local members, but by many troops stationed in the area.

After the second world war, development at Sidley led to the erection of the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, designed by Father Geoffrey Smith, the parish priest, with Mr. Alec Watson as architect, to be the potential hall of a later and more elaborate church building. The site was given by Mr. George Ravenshear, for many years a resident and considerable landowner in the town, who made a million-pound fortune from very modest beginnings. On its completion in 1954 the present church was blessed by the Bishop of Southwark.

No account of the work of the Roman Catholic Church in Bexhill would be complete without reference to Nazareth House. A branch of the Hammersmith home of the same name, the first part was opened in October 1894 after the establishment of a small branch at Hastings. It was built, according to a description at the time, 'as a permanent home for aged and infirm poor of both sexes, also for incurable and orphaned girls, those entirely idiotic or suffering from fits excepted'. In 1911 a west wing was added having on the upper floor a chapel which was consecrated at the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Part of the new accommodation was designed for elderly ladies and in August 1926 a men's wing and new kitchens were completed. Eleven years later, in 1937, there was added the east wing which now contains St. Mary Magdalene's primary school, but which first housed a school of some 130 children conducted by the sisters of the Home. The formal opening of

this wing received the civic support of the Mayor and Mayoress of Bexhill (Alderman and Mrs. W. N. Cuthbert), an acknowledgment of the fact that the doors of Nazareth House have always stood open to all regardless of creed. Over many years the Home has been assisted by freely-given local professional services, as well as the monetary donations on which it relies, and Nazareth House today plays a considerable part in the social and welfare services of East Sussex.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Nonconformity

ALTHOUGH BEXHILL, LIKE most south coast towns, has not been remarkable for that Radical-Nonconformity which exerted so great an influence in the industrial areas, the local record of the Free Churches is a long and notable one, and, like their brethren of other churches, the Nonconformists have done much to mark the progress of the town.

METHODISM

Seniority may be claimed by the Methodists who in 1809 had 23 local members including coastguards, a patrolling force much influenced by John Wesley who preached his last outdoor sermon at Winchelsea. The first local meetings were held in a cottage at the foot of Belle Hill and later in a stable loft until in 1825 the small Belle Hill chapel was built on land which had formed part of the King's German Legion depot during the Napoleonic wars, and which the Wesleyans bought from the Government. (Until the union of 1930 there were the Wesleyan Methodist, Primitive Methodist and Independent Wesleyan churches which together formed the Methodist cause.) The Belle Hill chapel was served by local preachers 'on the plan', at first from Lewes and from the 1820s Hastings, with the appointment of a minister to that town. Such local preaching was the training ground of many old stalwarts of the Radical and later Labour movements. From Belle Hill missionary enterprises began at Little Common in 1837; in a carpenter's shop at Sidley three years later, and in 1853 in a coastguard boathouse at The Sluice (Normans Bay) to reach which preachers had to walk along the foreshore.

With the growth of Bexhill south of the railway, the St. Leonards Wesleyan Methodist circuit, formed in 1886 to include Bexhill, bought for £250 the land on which the Sackville Road church and Parkhurst Hall now stand. To prepare for this, the Belle Hill chapel opened a mission hall in Station Road in 1890, one of the promoters being Mr. F. Wimshurst, a chemist, who was one of the first business-men south of the railway and whose premises at the corner of Devonshire Road and Parkhurst Road are now part of Boots the Chemists. He was the father of Mr.

F. F. B. Wimshurst, the only mayor of Bexhill to have died during his year of office. The success of the Station Road mission enabled the foundation stones to be laid in May 1892 of the Parkhurst Hall, which was first used as a chapel as well as a schoolroom and meeting place. One of the stones was laid by Viscountess Cantelupe, afterwards Countess De La Warr. The architect was Mr. P. H. Tree and the hall was opened in October 1892. In 1895 the circuit undertook the building of the church proper, with Mr. W. W. Pocock as architect, and 12 foundation stones were laid on Easter Monday 1896, the church being opened in July the same year. In 1924 new vestries were completed and in 1961 a new main entrance.

The mission at Little Common began in what, from its elementary nature, was called the Turf Chapel, re-built in brick in 1859, and which stood at the corner of Cooden Sea Road and the present Meads Road. In 1915 a site for a new church, necessitated by the growth of the local community, was bought in Church Hill Avenue, part of the purchase price coming from the sale of the old chapel and also of a Chandler Road chapel which had been another mission enterprise of the Belle Hill Wesleyans. Further progress was necessarily delayed until after the first world war. The architect for the building was Mr. C. F. Callow; six memorial stones of the type used to mark the graves of fallen soldiers in France were laid in April 1926, and the church opened in July that year, the ceremonies being much helped by facilities generously accorded by St. Mark's Church. In July 1953 a pre-war aim for a new church hall was realised, and a south aisle and improved main entrance were provided to the church itself in July 1964, the cost of these works being partly defrayed by grants from the Rank Trust.

In the latter half of the 19th century the cause at Sidley was encouraged by a small band of missionaries from the Primitive Methodist Church at Hastings, and this led in 1873 to the building of a tiny chapel in Haddocks Hill (Wrestwood Road), which served until Christ Church was built at the corner of Holliers Hill and Springfield Road. The old chapel, demolished in 1920, was at the end of the last century responsible for a mission held at a shop in Reginald Road to meet the needs of Primitive Methodists in the newer part of the town. The origin of Christ Church, now generally known as the Springfield Road Methodist Church, lay in a struggle between the Temperance movement and a firm of brewers which wanted to build a public house on the site. To prevent this, a London churchman, Mr. Marshall Jay, bought the land and gave it to the Primitive Methodist Connexion; the church was designed by Mr. Henry Harper, of Nottingham; memorial stones were laid in the summer of 1906 and in the following autumn for the adjoining Sunday school, and the church was opened in March 1907.

The Bexhill Primitive Methodists remained in the Hastings circuit until after the first world war when it was amalgamated with the Eastbourne circuit until the great union of the three Methodist churches in 1930. Partly as a result of this union the old Belle Hill chapel, the home of Methodism in Bexhill, and from

which so much devoted work had sprung, was closed in 1938, ending a ministry there of 112 years, and its remaining members joined forces with the church at Springfield Road. In 1970 the St. Leonards and Bexhill Methodist Circuit was merged with that of Hastings and Rye to form the Hastings, Bexhill and Rye Circuit with seven ministers and 25 churches.

One of the great stalwarts of local Methodism was Mr. Harry Hoad who died at the age of 84 in 1964 and who left a record of the church in Bexhill from which some of the foregoing account is taken. As an apprentice plumber he worked on the building of the Town Hall during the severe winter of 1894–95. 'In between the wars' the Rev. W. R. Bird, sometime minister of the Springfield Road church, became Bexhill's first librarian. Until taken over by the East Sussex County Council after the second world war, the library, which was variously housed, including in what is now the Elizabeth Room of the De La Warr Pavilion, was largely a voluntary enterprise with some moderate help from the Town Council.

BAPTISTS

The first attempt to establish the Baptist cause at Bexhill was made in the late 1870s when members of the Hastings church tried unsuccessfully to obtain a meeting place in the town. After a lapse of some years services were then held at the Assembly Room in Station Road, built in the early 1890s and the ground floor of which is now part of the showrooms of Caffyns Limited. No further progress was made until 1895 when Mrs. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, widow of the famous preacher, visited the town, and finding no Baptist chapel deputed Pastor J. S. Hockey to take up his abode in Bexhill and set to work to found a branch of the cause. Pastor Hockey, who came the following year, was refused permission to hold services in the Council chamber at the Town Hall (this room is now the large committee room), and first secured the use of the York Hall and later the Institute in Station Road. The York Hall, adjoining the hotel of that name, is now part of garage premises and the Institute is incorporated in the Youth Centre building.

With the help of Mrs. Spurgeon and her twin sons, themselves pastors, a site was bought in Clifford Road and on behalf of their mother, the brothers laid the foundation stones for a chapel in August 1896. The building was designed in 14th century Gothic style by Mr. Resta Moore who had been one of Pastor Hockey's deacons. This building, which is now the church hall, was opened in December the same year. The church then proceeded with a more ambitious scheme, and in April 1897 Mrs. Spurgeon, then convalescing at the Marine Hotel, cut the first sod for the foundations of what was to become the Beulah church, and in the following July laid the memorial stone. The architect was again Mr. Moore, and the new church was completed in August 1889 free of debt. This was due to the help of a member of the Church of England who gave Pastor Hockey a blank cheque to fill in the amount required to complete the payment.

Pastor Hockey, whose ministry continued until his death in June 1928, held a commanding place in the religious life of the town and exemplified the traditional Nonconformist link with Liberalism. In the early years of the century he was one of the local leaders of the Passive Resistance movement, Free Churchmen who objected to paying that part of the local rate which they considered provided for Anglican teaching in the schools, and which was levied under the Education Act of 1902. On one occasion when he and other resisters were due to be summoned before the magistrates for non-payment of the rate, Pastor Hockey's demand was met by a well-wisher, but the address which he had intended to give in court he delivered the following Sunday to a crowded congregation at Beulah church. The years of Pastor Hockey's successor at Beulah, the Rev. J. B. Payne, covered the period of the second world war during which the building suffered bomb damage, and the minister, his wife and neighbours fought a roof blaze until the fire brigade arrived and saved the church from destruction.

At Sidley, the mission which had been founded by the Methodists, was taken over by Beulah Church in 1907, and six years later a site was bought in Sidley Street on which was erected the iron building always known as Haddon Hall in spite of a change of title to Sidley Baptist Church. An adjoining site in Claremont Road was purchased in 1948, and under the direction of a deaconess a few members of Beulah formed the separate Sidley church, the foundation stones of a new building being laid in August 1956, one by Mr. David Perry, a founder-member of the original Haddon Hall and for many years Sidley's sub-postmaster. The church, designed by Mr. W. Howell Lewis, was opened in February 1957. After the advent of the Rev. David L. Jones, who was the first Baptist minister to be ordained in Bexhill, the Beulah and Sidley churches were united during the Beulah ministry of the Rev. Edmund Heddle, with an assistant pastor at Sidley. In 1964 the old Haddon Hall was removed (it was acquired by the Ashburnham Christian Trust for use at Ashburnham Place), and a brick-built church hall opened on the site the following autumn.

CONGREGATIONALISM

The early history of Congregationalism at Bexhill is linked with the well-known Nonconformist family of Stewart, of whom the most distinguished member was Sir Halley Stewart, the industrialist and philanthropist who founded the Halley Stewart Trust for research within a Christian foundation. Among his early business interests was the firm which is now Stewart Limited, wholesale grocers, of The Ridge, St. Leonards. His brother John, principal of the University School, Hastings, came to Bexhill in 1886 and began to hold services in a marquee on the lawn of his home, 'Heatherdune', at the top of the Down, a house which still stands though shorn of its former top storey.

As the need for a permanent church became evident, Mr. Stewart bought the

site on which the Victoria Hall was built, so named because it was opened in Queen Victoria's golden jubilee year, 1887. The hall was also used for secular purposes, including a private school. After a period of services conducted by visiting preachers, the Congregationalists invited Mr. Stewart who, while keeping his scholastic connection had meanwhile become pastor of the now long-defunct Croft Church at Hastings, to undertake the ministry at Bexhill. In 1895 he was joined, and later succeeded as minister by another brother, the Rev. George Stewart. In June 1896 a meeting of those who had signed a 'Statement of Belief' five years earlier passed a resolution 'that we hereby constitute ourselves the Congregational Church, Station Road, Bexhill' (Station Road was then so named to the bottom of Belle Hill). It was decided to build a church on the corner of Station Road and Victoria Road, next to the original hall. This, the present London Road church, was designed by Mr. Henry Ward, who, as already noted, was the architect for the Town Hall and later St. Stephen's Church, and was opened in June 1897, the month of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee.

The longest ministry at the church was that of the Rev. Joseph Osborne who came from Eastbourne in 1912 and remained until April 1939, taking a notable part in social work—he was a member of the Battle Board of Guardians—as well as in the religious life of the town. In the 1960s the church was largely re-furnished, additions made by various gifts, the forecourt re-styled and later the spire removed from the tower, the effect of which, after initial misgivings, enhanced the appearance of the building.

PRESBYTERIAN

The origin of St. George's Presbyterian Church of England in Cantelupe Road was in services held at the Station Road Institute for families who had moved to Bexhill with the growth of the town during the latter years of the 19th century and had previously attended the church in Warrior Square, St. Leonards. One of the visiting preachers, the Rev. T. Foster Edwards, was invited to become the first minister, and for his ordination service in May 1900 the Sackville Road Wesleyans generously offered the use of their church. Soon afterwards a site in Cantelupe Road was granted on favourable terms by the 8th Earl De La Warr, whose Countess laid one of the two foundation stones on Easter Monday 1901. The church had a local architect in Mr. G. H. Gray, agent to the De La Warr estate at Bexhill and afterwards an alderman and mayor of the borough. Opened in August 1901, it was intended to be the first part of a much larger building, but the remainder never materialised. One of the church's ministers just before the first world war, the Rev. James Fraser, was afterwards Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of England.

In the secular field the church's greatest distinction in the town has been its link with the Bexhill Lecture Society which it founded in 1907 and which for many years attracted celebrated lecturers and held a high place among such insti-

tutions in the country. The minister for more than 40 years from 1928, the Rev. Dr. F. E. England, was also for a long period chairman of the society which nevertheless declined during the later 1960s with the increasing popularity of television both among audiences and the more talented speakers.

SALVATION ARMY

The impact of the Salvation Army on Bexhill was made in the earliest days of the Christian Mission, as it was originally called. The first station of the Mission outside London was at Hastings, from where the movement spread among nearby villages, including Ninfield. There, in July 1871, Catherine, wife of the founder, William Booth, laid a commemorative stone for a meeting place which later became the Methodist Church. Ninfield Salvationists who marched to Bexhill to hold meetings were subjected at Sidley to showers of refuse, and there were many prosecutions for assaults on Salvationists or interference with their meetings. In spite of this services were held on the Down and where Town Hall Square now is, and a Bexhill Corps, started in May 1892, met in a small hall which had been the sawmill of a builder's works behind Sharpe's stables where Caffyns' garage now stands. An upstairs room was used by the first Athletic Club formed in the town, but the noise of its activities forced the Corps to discontinue using the hall below and for a time meetings were held in the streets until a room was obtained above a carpenter's shop in Windsor Road.

The present Salvation Army Hall in London Road dates from 1914, one of the foundation stones being laid in May that year by Viscount Hythe, afterwards the 2nd (and last) Earl Brassey who had been Mayor of Bexhill in 1908–09. Like many Corps, the Bexhill Salvationists once had a flourishing band whose playing at open-air services and on other occasions was a feature of town life up to the second world war.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

The first Christian Science services in Bexhill were held in 1905 at his home at Collington Manor (demolished in 1968 after being a children's home for many years and the site re-developed) by Mr. Daniel Mayer, who was four times mayor of the borough. Soon afterwards a room was hired at the Institute in Station Road, and in 1907 a small group of pioneers organised the First Church of Christ Scientist, being granted the status of a Christian Science Society two years later by the directors of the Mother Church. Services were held in a Marine Arcade room which was also used as a reading room.

A fund having been started to build a permanent church, a site was purchased at the corner of Cantelupe Road and Bolebrooke Road in 1914. Progress was delayed by the first world war, but a Sunday School was built in 1920 and an Army hut bought for temporary use as a church and reading room. The previous

year the members had rented a room in Marina Court, (a large block of flats and shops opened in 1901 and demolished in 1970 to make a car park), partly as a rest room for troops stationed in the locality, and this remained the society's public reading room until the premises in Sackville Road were opened in 1964. In June 1921 the society was recognised as the First Church of Christ Scientist Bexhill-on-Sea, and in 1930–31 the present church was built on the Cantelupe Road site; the first services there were held in March of the latter year and the church was dedicated in 1935 when free of debt.

ST. PAUL'S FREE CHURCH

The Free Church of England, which dates from 1845 and was at first associated with the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, was formed for evangelical churchpeople who objected to ritualistic practices in the Established Church. It held an exploratory meeting in Bexhill at the Glyne Hall Hotel in October 1923 and the next January services began under the ministry of the Rev. Donald Thompson, afterwards a bishop of the church. In 1924 St. Paul's, a temporary wooden church was dedicated on land purchased in Wickham Avenue, and a hall added in 1931. Three years later, as a thankoffering for the church's progress, the congregation endowed a bed in Bexhill Hospital, which had been opened as a voluntary institution the preceding year, and which was named 'St. Paul's bed'.

During the ministry of the Rev. Arthur Ward (1957–66) a scheme to re-build and enlarge the church was undertaken with Mr. R. Burstow, of St. Leonards, as architect, and one of the commemorative stones was laid in September 1962 by Viscount Alexander of Hillsborough, a former First Lord of the Admiralty, and well known for many years for his work in the Co-operative movement. The church was re-opened and dedicated in April 1963, the re-opening being performed by Viscountess Alexander whose husband gave an address. In the summer of 1970 the church took over and re-opened, pending re-development of the site, the former St. James' Church at Normans Bay which, until it was closed in 1967 and the site sold, had been a Church of England place of worship in St. Mark's parish for 101 years.

HAMILTON HALL

Hamilton Hall, Eastwood Road, was opened in August 1898 by the Christian Brethren. The original corrugated iron building, given by a London businessman, remained in use for 60 years, a brick-built extension being added in 1949. Eight years later the hall, which had greatly deteriorated, was demolished and a new building, opened in November 1957, linked to the extension, although the original baptistry remained in use. In 1949 a Sunday School was started at Sidley House (Sidley Community Centre) and later a women's fellowship began meetings there.

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Until 1957 Bexhill members of the Society of Friends, the Quakers, travelled to Hastings or Eastbourne to worship, but a 'bus strike that year resulted in a meeting for worship being held at a private house in the town. Thereafter services were increased and in November 1965 the present Meeting House in Albert Road was acquired. The first public address in Bexhill on the subject of Quakerism was given the next year by the late Dame Kathleen Lonsdale, a resident of the town, and who was president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1967–68, the first woman to be so honoured.

SLUICE MISSION

For 50 years from 1886 a mission was conducted at The Sluice (Normans Bay) by Mrs. Sarah Matthews, to whose memory a plaque was unveiled there by her son in September 1937. Her husband had been a coastguard officer and Mrs. Matthews began the mission in the old coastguard station before a cottage was acquired for meetings and later a mission hall built.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Education

THE INFLUENCE OF the Church of England on education in Bexhill remained almost unbroken until the opening of the first portion of the Down schools in 1907. After Thomas Pye's use of the Chantry chapel as a 'schole' house during his rectorship of St. Peter's between 1589 and 1609 there is no record of continuity in education until the middle of the 19th century; only a mention of one John Dann who was appointed schoolmaster in 1775.

The first school building proper was that of St. Peter's school in Holliers Hill, converted into flats since the second world war. Assisted by the National Society for the Education of the Poor According to the Principles of the Church of England, the school was opened in 1853 during the ministry of the Rev. H. W. Simpson. In 1862 a girls department was formed and later infants admitted. The parents of the pupils paid a few pence a week each.

At Little Common, writing and arithmetic had been taught in a small room which was the forerunner of St. Mark's school, opened in 1855 (the ragstone for the school building was brought by sea from Hastings cliffs to Cooden). At that time, and until 1857, St. Mark's was still in St. Peter's parish. St. Mark's school closed in 1961 on the opening of the East Sussex Education Authority's primary school nearby, and the old building was demolished six years later to make way for a car park for the church congregations. From 1866 the little church of St. James at Normans Bay was also used as a school for many years, at first for the children of men of the Coast Brigade and Coastguard Service stationed there. At Sidley, also then part of St. Peter's parish, the 'controlled' school which is still in use in All Saints' Lane was opened in 1865 for the education of 'poor children of both sexes, inhabitants of Sidley Green in the parish of Bexhill and other parts of the parish', and the building was also used for worship until the erection of the 'Iron' Church in 1885.

The growth of Bexhill led to separate schools for girls and infants of St. Peter's being built in Barrack Road in 1885, and these incorporated the Wilson

Memorial School which had been accommodated in one of the old wooden houses on the opposite side of the road and which dated from the King's German Legion camp there in the Napoleonic wars. As the town extended south of the railway line it became necessary to provide for children in the new parish of St. Barnabas, and the first part of the building which is now the branch of the East Sussex County Library was opened as an infants school in 1893, the upper floor being brought into use four years later after being used as a parish room. In 1897 an appeal was launched to raise money for building St. Barnabas' boys school in Reginald Road, and this was opened the following year. Both St. Peter's and St. Barnabas' boys schools were marked by the long headmasterships respectively of Mr. Edwin Bunting, who died in 1964 at the age of 98, and Mr. F. E. Poulton who was 88 when he passed away the year before. Both exerted an immense influence for good on generations of boys, and the girls schools were no less notable for distinguished mistresses who set an outstanding example for which countless pupils were grateful through life. With the limited resources of those days wonders were indeed performed.

The extent to which the Church of England successfully provided local education (though even before the first world war under increasing difficulties both on accommodation and financial grounds) meant that no publicly elected school board was ever formed for Bexhill under the Education Act of 1870 which introduced compulsory elementary schooling. There was, of course, an increasing number of private schools, while after the opening of St. Mary Magdalene's Church (now the church hall) in 1893 a small school was conducted there for children of Roman Catholic parents.

A major change resulted from the Education Act of 1902, known as the 'Balfour' Act from the Prime Minister of the time. Under this legislation Bexhill qualified, as a municipal borough with more than 10,000 population, to become a Part III authority for elementary education, and a local Education Committee, comprising a majority of Town Council members with a co-opted minority of whom two had to be women, was formed in 1903. Its initial school building was the first part of the Down School opened in 1907, built on the field where the parish workhouse had stood before the formation of the Battle Poor Law Union in 1834. The influence of the Church remained such, however, that a motion that the Apostles Creed should be taught was rejected only because the chairman of the Education Committee, Dr. J. P. Wills, who was Vicar's warden at St. Barnabas' Church, declined to give a casting vote. The second half of the original Down school, that nearer the Down Road, was completed in 1912 and the whole accommodated 700 children. During the first world war the building was commandeered for military use and the school transferred to Whindown, now St. Francis School.

After the first world war a scheme for a central school was rejected by the Board of Education, but as a result of the Hadow Report in 1926 it became clear

that more school accommodation would have to be provided, and in 1930 the Town Council approved in principle the re-organisation of elementary education in the borough. Land for a new senior school was bought at the rear of the Down school, but the scheme was delayed by the economic crisis of 1931, while not until six years later was a syllabus of religious instruction agreed and the closure envisaged of several of the old church schools, a decision eventually implemented under the stress of the second world war. The Town Council scheme which resulted in the commencement of what is now the Down county secondary modern school was expedited by the decision to raise the school leaving age to 15, but building was delayed by the war and not until 1941 was even part of the new school brought into use with the return of many children from evacuation.

At the outbreak of the war Bexhill was a reception centre for evacuees and several schools gave hospitality to London children, but the fall of France and consequent threat of invasion in 1940 caused the closure of the local schools and a large-scale official evacuation to Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. There was soon a drift back, however, and at the end of the year there were more than 300 children in the town receiving no formal education. The Board of Education therefore sanctioned the re-opening in January 1941 of most of the old schools and part of the new Down school. St. Peter's boys and St. Barnabas' girls and infants never opened again. The former, the oldest school building in the town was used in 1942 to store machinery salvaged from the bombed '*Bexhill-on-Sea Observer*' premises in Devonshire Road. The whole of the new Down school building was brought into educational use in 1943 when almost all the evacuees had returned.

Meanwhile, in 1942, despite the pressure of the war, the Rector of St. Peter's, the Rev. H. B. W. Denison, called a conference of ministers of religion, the local Education Committee and teachers to resolve the question of religious education. The Education Act of 1944, however, abolished Part III authorities, so that in April 1945 the Bexhill Education Committee ended and the municipal powers over elementary education were transferred to the East Sussex County Council acting through its own Education Committee. The town was refused the status of a divisional executive under the Act, which would have allowed delegated powers, but was granted a district sub-committee of very limited authority which functioned until dissolved by mutual agreement and the management of the Bexhill schools revised in 1970.

Preparations which had been made by the Bexhill Education Committee and the Church of England for post-war education in the town provided the basis of expansion under the East Sussex authority. The Down senior school building, so providentially started before the war, was immediately available as the new secondary modern schools for boys and girls, with pupils coming from a wide 'catchment area'. The boys school was especially fortunate in the 20 years headship of Mr. R. B. Nicolson, whose retirement in 1966 was followed by the amalgama-

tion of the two schools into one co-educational establishment the following year.

The transference of children at 11 years of age (except those of St. Mary Magdalene Roman Catholic school) to the new secondary schools left the Church of England with only infants and junior pupils, and in conformity with the diocesan policy of concentrating on junior schools rather than the shorter-stay infants, it was decided to build a new junior aided school to replace several of the old buildings which did not meet Ministry of Education requirements. This resulted in the 'aided' St. Peter and St. Paul school, Buckhurst Road, the formal opening of which by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester in November 1956 acknowledged one of the greatest educational enterprises in the history of the town. The school cost more than £70,000, half the net cost of the building being met by the Church, and of this some £9,000 was raised locally. The success of this courageous undertaking, which preserved the influence of the Church in local education, was largely due to the able chairmanship of the combined board of managers of Canon Earwaker, Rector of St. Peter's Church. With its opening, the old St. Barnabas' boys and St. Peter's girls schools were closed, the latter building being incorporated with the infants department to form the Chantry county primary school. Although the Church thus surrendered control over the Barrack Road schools which it had built 70 years before in the first expansion of Bexhill, the choice of the new name recalled the 'schole house' of Dr. Pye in the Chantry chapel of St. Peter's Church more than 300 years earlier. Meanwhile the pre-1945 intention of the old Bexhill Education Committee to build new schools at Sidley and Little Common as soon as conditions permitted, was implemented by the East Sussex authority with the opening of the Sidley county primary school in Buxton Drive in 1951 and, as already noted, that at Little Common ten years later.

In the post-war re-organisation, provision for senior Roman Catholic children who had previously had only the small building of St. Mary Magdalene's, which had been recognised as an all-age school in 1910 and extended in 1936, was made by the erection of St. Richard's secondary modern school in Ashdown Road, a quarter of the £175,000 cost being met by the Catholic Church. Opened in January 1959, it was designed to take children from Hastings, Eastbourne and Battle as well as Bexhill. The junior school continued in Magdalen Road until 1961 when the conversion of part of the east wing of Nazareth House was completed to form a new primary school.

An educational development of special interest was the opening in 1970 of the Glyne Gap school, built by the East Sussex authority at a cost of £80,000 to cater for mentally handicapped pupils.

Secondary education became the responsibility of the East Sussex County Council under the Act of 1902, but partly due to the first world war and the difficulty of obtaining a site, the boys and girls grammar schools in Turkey Road (which were amalgamated in 1970) were not built until 1925–26. They were

opened for use in October of the latter year and formally in February 1927 by the Duchess of Atholl, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education and the only woman to hold office in the Conservative government of the day. The schools were evacuated in 1940 but re-opened in 1943. Since the second world war the buildings have been extended, notably by new assembly and dining halls for the girls school in 1957. Both schools owed an immense debt to their first head teachers, Mr. W. L. Lamb and Miss E. Davis, both of whom served for a quarter of a century. After his retirement Mr. Lamb was ordained into the Church of England. On the sudden death of his successor, Mr. J. S. Brown, in 1968 the East Sussex authority proceeded with the amalgamation of the schools and this became effective with the formation of Bexhill Grammar School from the beginning of the school year in September 1970. As in the case of the Down school, this did not provide for comprehensive education, although it formed part of the East Sussex programme towards implementing national policy.

Further education, as it is now called, began in Bexhill in 1892 when the County Council made a small grant for technical instruction and lectures were held in the Victoria Hall. In 1908 evening continuation classes were started under Mr. Bunting, headmaster of St. Peter's boys school, and these were maintained with varying degrees of success 'in between the wars', while even during the second world war several hundred students were enrolled. Since then an Area Further Education Office has functioned at Bexhill and encouraged a great expansion of the Evening Institute held at the Down School.

Independent Schools

Speaking in 1908 at the conclusion of his mayoralty, Lord Brassey acknowledged the part of the independent schools in promoting the prosperity of Bexhill, and indeed the character of the town, largely formed by these institutions in the late Victorian and Edwardian age, lasted until the second world war. Not only was the time favourable to their commencement, with its emphasis on strict principles and manly games—a healthy mind in a healthy body—but the still rural nature of the town gave room for expansive playing fields around the large premises, some specially built and others converted houses, which accommodated the private schools. Though not necessarily sectarian, most exerted a strong Christian influence, and the 'crocodiles' of pupils on their way to and from church were a familar sight for many years. Many schools took boarders, children whose parents were often abroad, the father usually in one of the armed or administrative services of the Crown, and these people came to Bexhill on furlough and many eventually retired to the town. This sequence existed until the second world war and among the changed conditions which afterwards reduced the number and role of the independent schools in the borough was Britain's withdrawal from its old imperial status.

In 1900 there were more than thirty private schools (it must be remembered that until 1926 there were no grammar schools in the town) and this average was maintained for many years though there were naturally changes in individual schools.

Seniority was claimed by Holmwood, founded with only one pupil in a house in Station Road in 1885. Two years later the school moved to new premises in Hastings Road which, after many vicissitudes, are now part of Charters Towers school and thus preserve an educational link over the greater part of a century. Holmwood's formidable headmaster, Mr. E. O. Burbidge, was ordained into the Church of England and became a curate at St. Peter's Church. Like many noted headmasters, the stories about him were legion and some perhaps even legendary. Later the school was owned by the Warwickshire cricketer Mr. A. F. Bryan and his brother who was killed in the first world war. Hastings Road became the first area in which the independent schools were extensively developed. In 1887 the Rev. F. R. Burrows, who had a boys preparatory school at St. Leonards, bought the site on which, in the next decade, he built the first part of Ancaster House school, opened in 1898. From 1906 it was continued as a girls school by his widow and later by his daughter, Miss F. H. Burrows, who had a long and distinguished career in the public life of Bexhill and became an alderman and honorary freeman of the borough.

Many other schools followed in the locality of Hastings Road of which it is possible to mention only a few here. St. Hilary's took over Normanhurst at Catsfield in 1922 after the sale of that estate following the death of the 2nd and last Earl Brassey. The same year St. Etheldreda's moved to Battle Abbey where the original name is preserved in that of one of the school houses. New College is now part of Charters Towers which moved to Bexhill from East Grinstead in 1934 and has, like Ancaster House, expanded to become one of the principal independent girls schools in the country, taking many pupils from abroad. In between the world wars Wrestwood, built in 1897 by the famous diplomat Sir Edward Malet, who was related by marriage to the De La Warr family, became Lindores school (originally founded at Linkwell, the old home of the Day family in Old Town High Street) and is now St. Mary's school for physically handicapped children.

In the Edwardian years several important schools were established in the Collington area with the co-operation of the trustees of the Howard estate where the first mayor of Bexhill, Mr. Ebenezer Howard, had promoted the cricket festivals famous for their prodigious scoring. Here were Seafield, which moved from Hastings Road; St. Wilfrid's, badly damaged by fire in 1925, later restored and eventually becoming Falconbury; and Effingham House girls school which moved from Folkestone in 1908 and took over Birchington Farm, the oldest part of which dated back to 1802. Also in the Collington area were Lake House school, which had been founded in the Woodsgate part of the town and is now owned by the Girls Life Brigade, and Collington Rise, now a holiday home and conference centre.

Further west, at Cooden, Portsdown Lodge, now a Post Office training centre, held a distinctive place in the world of girls' education for many years, while on South Cliff Winceby House, founded in Cambridgeshire and which came to Bexhill after the first world war, closed after half a century under the same principals. It is now an Inner London Education Authority home for maladjusted boys.

One of the oldest girls schools was the Beehive, founded at Windsor in 1876 for the sisters of Eton boys by the sister of Oscar Browning, himself an Eton master and who became a well-known visitor to Bexhill. The Beehive moved to the town in 1900 and occupied houses in Dorset Road, taking over Broadoak Manor, the old home of the Lane family, after the second world war. The school was long renowned for its prowess at cricket. The construction of Terminus Road to give access to the new West Station of the Crowhurst branch railway line in 1902 led to several schools being built in Collington Avenue. St. John's school for girls, which came from Redhill and celebrated its centenary in 1920, became after the second world war the junior section of the Royal Merchant Navy school and is now part of the administrative centre of the Hastings and Thanet Building Society. Normandale, founded in 1905, amalgamated with its neighbour Harewood in 1963; the Normandale site, including a once fine cricket field, was disposed of for residential building and Harewood itself closed in 1971. St. Francis girls school in Westdown Road, opened in 1946, occupies a property the oldest part of which was built as a private mansion in the late 18th century, and which from 1910 until the outbreak of the first world war was a select school for German boys, a nephew of Kaiser Wilhelm II being among the pupils. (With this school; the Du Mont family, which came from Cologne, at the Manor House; and the numerous foreign staff at the large hotels which then flourished, there was a strong German element in Bexhill before the first world war.)

In 1930 an Independent Schools Association was formed of which the first president was Mr. H. G. Coghlan, founder of Seafield school and a notable sportsman who had helped the 8th Earl De La Warr in the formation of Cooden Beach golf club. At the suggestion of the 9th Earl, who had recently concluded his memorable three-year mayoralty of the borough, the association adopted in 1936 the Scottish universities' custom of electing a Rector, and among the holders of this office were Commander Stephen King-Hall, a well-known author and traveller, and Earl De La Warr himself. Revived after the second world war, the association flourished until closures during the 1960s greatly diminished the number and influence of the independent schools in the town. These resulted partly from the retirement of principals whose names were inevitably linked with their establishments, and partly because of economic circumstances, the rising standards of state schools, and the ending of traditional family loyalties which had provided successive generations of pupils. The names of many of the principals, some of whom took a leading part in the public life of the town, will always be deservedly

honoured in the history of the borough. The war itself struck a blow from which many of the schools never fully recovered, and some not at all. With the fall of France in 1940 they were evacuated, chiefly to the west country, and some never returned. In any case many parents had speedily removed their children from a town which was suddenly placed in the forefront of the battle. After 1945 some schools returned and re-established themselves, but in general it was to fight a losing battle against circumstances and times to which they became increasingly unsuited. The survivors, indeed distinguished survivors, remain to carry the torch of independent education to which Bexhill has made an impressive contribution and which, on its side, so greatly helped the growth and prosperity of the town.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Industry and Commerce

UNTIL MODERN TIMES such industry as existed in Bexhill was almost wholly devoted to local needs, and in particular those of the farming community. The basis of this was the famous Wealden iron industry which had been in existence since pre-Roman times and lasted until the early 19th century. The last furnace, that at Ashburnham, closed in 1813. The sites of three workings within the modern boundary of Bexhill are identified in Ernest Straker's authoritative 'Wealden Iron', the principal one being a furnace and forge at Buckholt, about two miles north of St. Peter's Church, and which was active until the 1660s. In the previous century, when the manor of Buckholt was owned by the Dacre family of Herstmonceux, the forge was worked by Bartholomew Jeffreys, under whose will it passed to the Alfray family after whom a modern road in the borough is named. After acquiring the Buckholt working the Alfray family bought the nearby forge at Potmans Lane in the neighbouring parish of Catsfield.

An early type of bloomery, a forge producing wrought iron by an elementary process, existed in Little Henniker wood, north of St. Peter's Church, and there was another at Barnhorn, some three-quarters of a mile west of Little Common cross-roads, mentioned in the 14th century when the manor of Barnhorn was owned by Battle Abbey. The vast cinder heaps of the Wealden bloomeries were largely taken for road making. The workings declined when the advent of coal placed the charcoal-burning furnace at a disadvantage, but until then the vast output of Sussex iron had included military and naval guns and, more peacefully, the splendid railings of St. Paul's Cathedral. Forges to cater for the local agricultural needs existed in Old Town at the top of what is now Upper Sea Road, at Sidley and at Little Common. The Old Town and Sidley blacksmiths' forges were demolished after the second world war. That at Little Common, near the cross-roads, drew water from the old village pond with which to shrink the iron tyres on to the great wheels of the Sussex farm wagons.

In 1804 evidence of thin bands of lignite, formed from drifted wood, was

found in digging wells for the King's German Legion, then establishing a camp at Bexhill, by William James, surveyor to the Manor estate. It was mistakenly identified as coal, a company was formed, and some £80,000 reported to have been spent in unsuccessful borings at the foot of the Down and near the present Ashdown Road where the workings, including surface buildings, were obliterated when the railway was built in 1846. William James, a man of ingenuity, undertook in 1821 to survey a Manchester to Liverpool railway route, a work later carried out by George Stephenson.

Poor communications with other parts of the country—Sussex roads were notorious—made the village of Bexhill largely dependent on its own resources. Brickmaking became important with a number of small yards at various times, the locations later being changed as the clay was worked out and the elementary process of brick manufacture followed the town's expansion. This operated until within the present century. The largest workings, still in use, are those of Redland Bricks Ltd., Turkey Road, but among others formerly well known were those of the Adams family at Sidley and of the Carey family in Broadoak Lane. In earlier years a claypit was worked just south of the railway line by Sea Road, and another where St. Richard's school playing fields now are, this being filled in to make a cricket ground in the late 1890s. In the same decade there was a working near Woodville Road. With the town's growth the local building trade assumed increasing importance and it remains a principal source of employment today.

The outdoor nature of most local industry placed it at the mercy of the weather and seasonal unemployment which, in days when there was no social security, was all too common. This hazard helped to encourage the friendly society movement when the town became large enough to support such institutions from the 1880s onwards. Because it never had a single large staple industry the town avoided the extremes of trade fluctuations and national trends have been delayed in their local impact. To alleviate hardship in the 1890s there was a soup kitchen for the distribution of meals to the poor. No official help, other than poor relief through the Board of Guardians, existed until labour exchanges were started in 1910 and until 1928, when the first local branch was opened, Bexhill was administered in this way from Hastings. Not until after the second world war did the town secure independent employment exchange status.

Acute trade depression before the first world war, however, led to some emigration from the town and small colonies of Bexhillians were established in Canada and Australia, family links being preserved to the present time. The Belle Hill Wesleyan chapel in particular lost a number of young men who sought prosperity in the new lands. Largely through the efforts of the Vicar of St. Barnabas' Church, a labour yard was founded in 1908 to provide modest work for unemployed men and a thousand bundles of firewood were prepared daily. In the early 1930s increasing unemployment led to the formation of an Unemployed Guild of Help

in the town, and in 1934 a recreation and occupational centre was opened by Earl De La Warr as mayor with influential church and medical support.

When the town had begun to expand, both as a residential and holiday resort, there was an influx of tradesmen, chiefly from the Sussex countryside, to meet the new demands, and their daughters found employment in domestic service which was a plentiful and cheap commodity in those days. Directories of the period show trades which have now vanished: there were basket-makers, bath-chairmen, carriers, fly proprietors, livery stables, oil and colourmen, luggage porters, wheelwrights and window-blind makers. Horses and carriages could be hired at several stables in the town. In the wake of tradesmen catering for local needs came a few specialist enterprises of which the most notable was the pioneer aeroplane engine work of Mr. Gustavus Green who had a small workshop in Victoria Road and made the first successful British aero-engine. In the first world war, however, it proved somewhat heavy for the power produced and at the request of the authorities Mr. Green turned his attention to torpedo boat engines. He moved to Twickenham in the 1920s and died in 1964 just before he would have celebrated his hundredth birthday.

In modern times employment expansion has come chiefly from the public services and offices of private institutions, but efforts to develop this to an even greater extent, in conjunction with the removal of offices from London, have not met with the success which had been hoped. The limited range of commercial opportunities has, since the second world war, led to the early departure from Bexhill of many of its best young citizens. Until the development of industrial estates at the eastern end of De La Warr Road and on the land of the Bexhill West to Crowhurst branch railway line which was closed in 1964, the chief concentration of local industry was at Sidley. In the 1960s, however, the Corporation purchased the former railway land and encouraged its development as a trading estate, bringing new business to the town, enabling established firms to expand, and providing sites for official services such as those of the fire and ambulance brigades.

Service and productive industry has almost entirely supplanted agriculture in providing local employment. Until the 1870s, and in many respects much later, Bexhill remained an agricultural community. Small farms abounded, some extending into what is now the main urban area, while on the outskirts farms which still exist dotted the lower slopes of the upland spurs stretching into the marshes around. Mixed farming, together with the growing of hops which has now entirely disappeared, was general; Horsfield's 'History of Sussex', published in 1835, records that there were then 34 acres devoted to hop cultivation in Bexhill, and several of the old oasts remain to this day. A feature of local farming was the use of oxen for ploughing, and when the gasworks was built in Ashdown Road in the 1880s it was within sight of these patient beasts ploughing the heavy land.

Of the windmills which dotted the Bexhill skyline, especially on the high ground to the north, nothing remains except the brick roundels of the Down Mill at Glenleigh Park and of Pankhurst's Mill at Sidley. The first Ordnance Survey in 1813 showed three windmills at Sidley, the others being near Old Mill House and east of the Ninfield Road in a field suggested for the first Bexhill waterworks in 1884. This mill is indicated on the Ordnance revision of 1873. There is also the record of a mill on the high ground at Barnhorn but this had vanished before 1813. It is, however, shown on a Sussex survey made in 1587 in anticipation of coastal defence against the Spanish Armada which passed through the Channel the next year. The most celebrated of Bexhill's mills, however, was that known as the Down, erected in 1735, acquired by the Hoad family in 1857 and which continued working until 1928. In 1956 one of the 30-foot sweeps was broken in a gale and after deterioration the mill collapsed in 1965, a sad end to one of the best-known and most picturesque landmarks of the town. In the 19th century sheaves of corn were specially ground at the Down Mill for the harvest thanksgiving at St. Mark's Church, Little Common, and the wheat used in the celebration of Holy Communion. Pankhurst's Mill, also a picturesque structure and long owned by the family of that name, was purchased in 1928 for £25 by a lover of windmills, carefully taken down, and re-erected at Leigh, Kent, at a cost of £1,500.

Among agricultural records which have survived is that of an assessment made in 1781 under an Act of Parliament for granting aid to the Crown by a land tax, but the sturdy independence for which Bexhill was then (and for long afterwards) noted resulted in several prominent landowners declining to give the required information. By order of the Lord Lieutenant of Sussex meetings were also held to ascertain livestock resources in connection with national defence, but again some owners refused to make a return.

Until the urban expansion Bexhill enjoyed no separate professional services invaluable even to a small town. Legal, banking and other business was supplied mainly from Hastings and a number of professional practices established in Bexhill had their origin in the neighbouring borough, descending directly to the present day. Early associations of professional and businessmen concerned for the progress of Bexhill led to the formation in 1907 of a Commercial Society which was succeeded by the present Chamber of Commerce in 1948.

BANKING

Local banking services started in 1885 when the private firm of Beeching Hodgkin and Beeching, founded at Tunbridge Wells in 1815, opened a branch in Old Town High Street. This bank was taken over by Lloyds in 1890 and two years later the Bexhill branch was transferred to the present site in Devonshire Road, then fast becoming the town's main shopping thoroughfare. Early in 1892 the London and County Bank had started a branch in Station Road, premises now a

café whose hanging sign obscures the original bank monogram. This bank was amalgamated with the Westminster which in 1898 opened the handsome premises in Town Hall Square it occupies to this day, though the growth of the town south of the railway caused a branch to be opened in St. Leonards Road in 1928.

The bank of Barclay and Company opened a Devonshire Road office in 1899, and it is some evidence of the relative importance of the two towns at that time that until 1901, when it became a full branch, it was under the control of that at Battle. This office is now an estate agency but retains the original and distinctive frontage. Also in 1899 the London and Provincial Bank opened premises on the opposite side of Devonshire Road and this, as a result of amalgamations, has been Barclays' branch since 1921. In this year the Midland opened its local branch and the following year came the National Provincial and Union Bank (now amalgamated with the Westminster), whose premises at the corner of Devonshire and St. Leonards roads were modernised in 1967. Martins Bank, now part of Barclays' organisation, first had premises on the east side of Devonshire Road, but these were closed during the second world war and the branch re-opened on its present site in 1946, being re-built in 1961. The growth of the Little Common and Sidley areas led in the 1960s to the opening of sub-branches catering for those localities. Since 1951 the town has had a branch of the South Eastern Trustee Savings Bank, an institution which began at Brighton in 1818.

NEWSPAPERS

Not until the 1880s, when the village of Bexhill was expanding rapidly towards the sea, did its population justify the publication of a local newspaper. Earlier the *Sussex Advertiser* (which had provided a record of the Regency period at Brighton), and later the *Sussex Express* from Lewes served those who sought county and agricultural news. In September 1887, however, there appeared the first issue of the *Bexhill-on-Sea Chronicle and Visitors' List, Battle, Pevensey, Sidley and Little Common Advertiser*, a formidable title after the fashion of those days. The paper was acquired the next year by a newly-formed local company and moved in 1893 to offices in Town Hall Square which it occupied for the remaining 37 years of its existence, though coming under new proprietorship in 1911. Under the able direction of McIvor Rapp as editor and W. P. Watkins as manager, the *Chronicle* was remarkable for its thoroughness, and its files provide an unequalled source of information about the development of the modern town during the 1890s and early years of this century.

In May 1896, well-timed to report the opening of the Kursaal by the Duchess of Teck, the Hastings firm of F. J. Parsons Ltd., founded in 1853, and which continues in direct family descent from the original proprietorship, published the *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer and Visitors' Register*. It had a temporary office in Station Road until new offices and printing works were ready in Devonshire

Road early the next year, and these, now part of Longley Brothers' store, were the home of the *Observer* until bombed in 1942 when the machinery and files of the paper were rescued with great difficulty. Directed locally for many years by Mr. A. Vincett Parsons, who was active in the public life of the town, the *Observer* gradually obtained an ascendancy over the *Chronicle* and acquired that business in 1930, amalgamating the two papers into the present *Observer*. During these formative years the paper was diligently served by Fred Wilson, who was editor for nearly half a century, being succeeded in 1947 by his colleague of almost 40 years, Frank R. Samuels, while the manager from the start was S. G. Reeve whose son followed him in 1936. Mr. A. V. Parsons and then the editor through articles in the *Observer* in 1898, led the campaign which four years later obtained the town's charter of incorporation.

Before the first world war both the *Observer* and the *Chronicle* published daily summer news sheets giving particulars of local entertainments, while 'Visitors' Lists', either separate or included in the weekly papers, detailed guests at the hotels and boarding houses, the newspaper offices maintaining books in which visitors could record their names unless these were communicated by the establishments at which they were staying.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Smuggling

ALTHOUGH SMUGGLING IS certainly not a legitimate commercial enterprise, it reached such proportions locally that for the better part of a hundred years it contributed substantially to the livelihood of many inhabitants, some of whose descendants are today highly respected families. During the 18th century the duties on imports from France led to extensive smuggling along the Sussex and Kent coasts. It developed into a well organised and determined industry, and the men of Bexhill and Little Common (which had its own gang) were no less ingenious in their exploits than the legendary Dr. Syn of Russell Thorndike's Romney Marsh books.

Lists preserved in Bexhill Museum indicate the transport of much contraband liquor and other commodities, and the extent of the traffic must have meant widespread support for the smugglers, if not active assistance. Smuggling was, in fact, hardly regarded as a crime, except by the Revenue authorities, any more than a motoring offence is today. It is true that many of the 'runs' were devised and carried out with an ingenuity worthy of a better cause, but they were also often accompanied by brutality, sometimes leading to death. Recollections of old smugglers, told many years later to Dr. Wills and recorded in his diary, show that, whatever the stories may have gained in the telling, smuggling had a brutalising effect and the locality became notorious for its roughness. One aged man, whose father had worked on the building of the Martello towers, told Dr. Wills more than 70 years later 'in them days there weant no religion in people at all, they was just like wild folk, like them poor outlandish savage parts. I was brought up right enough, and we had to go every Sunday and say a lesson to the passon, but I went bad afterwards, very wild'.

In 1791 an abstract of seizures made by Thomas Pumphrey, 'a riding officer stationed at Bexhill within the district of the Port of Rye' (which extended westwards to Beachy Head), showed that more than 50 gallons of spirits had been found in 13 casks buried in the beach at Bexhill, but all except one were

'rescued' by the smugglers and their sympathisers to the number of some 150.

After the Napoleonic wars, when the duties on imported spirits were relaxed, an attempt to combat the vast smuggling operations more effectively was made by combining the old Revenue waterguard and landguard into a preventive Coastguard service in 1822 under the Board of Customs, but along the Sussex and Kent coasts a naval force known as the Coast Blockade operated from 1817 until merged into the Coastguard service in 1831. During these years, when a smugglers' lugger was hurriedly beached at Hastings to escape a Coast Blockade frigate, one of the

IX.—The Bexhill section of the beautifully drawn topographical map of Sussex planned from an actual survey begun by Gardner and Yeakell and completed by T. Cream, London, in 1795.

crew was a Bexhill man who had been outlawed for conveying information to the French Government about the state of the British Navy. An attempted 'run' at Bexhill in 1824 resulted in the capture of seven smugglers and one hundred tubs of spirits, but one of the Blockade men was found dead on the sands the next day.

Normans Bay (then The Sluice) was a notorious haunt of local smugglers. On Trafalgar Day itself, in 1805, a Revenue cutter from Newhaven caught a boat there and captured its crew and 540 casks of brandy, and the following January 500

parcels of tea were taken from a lugger off-shore. The Little Common smugglers owned two vessels, the *Queen Charlotte*, called after King George III's consort, and *The Long Boat*. In 1822 a landing of contraband from the former was prevented by Customs men armed with carbines who effectively cowed a crowd of some three hundred smugglers. This gang kept detailed account books of its activities and used many ingenious devices for concealing cargoes and deceiving the Revenue men.

In January 1828 occurred almost the last of the bloodthirsty escapades in the district when an augmented Coast Blockade force of about forty caught up with a gang of smugglers at Sidley Green after a running fight which had been witnessed from the windows of the Bell Hotel in Old Town. The smugglers included some sixteen 'batsmen' armed with stout ash poles about six feet long, their favourite weapon. A Blockade quartermaster and two 'batsmen' were killed, the body of one of the smugglers being found in the barn of Cramp's farm almost hacked to pieces by the cutlasses of the Blockade men; another man was crippled for life. Cramp's farm, to where the smugglers had retreated, lay between the brow of Holliers Hill and where the Pelham Hotel now stands. At the Spring Assizes at Horsham (where Sussex Assizes were then sometimes held because of the bad condition of the roads southwards) eight of the smugglers who had been captured were remitted to the Old Bailey, where sentence of death was commuted to one of transportation to the convict settlement of New South Wales. Several old Bexhill names appear among them.

Smuggling nevertheless persisted into the next decade with occasional savage affrays. In 1832 the chief boatman and another man of the Coastguard station at Number 42 Martello Tower at Bulverhythe were killed and were interred in the old Barrack Road burial ground at Bexhill. During the latter years of smuggling a detachment of the preventive force was stationed on the east side of Sea Lane, where until Mr. Webb built the sea wall in 1883 there was a large iron pipe to the seashore, said to have been linked originally to the shaft sunk in the fruitless search for coal.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Coastguards

AS A NAVAL organisation the Coast Blockade had accommodated its men afloat, but the transfer of preventive duties to the Coastguard service under the Board of Customs in 1831 meant that shore quarters had to be provided, and this was the origin of the coastguard stations and houses along this part of the coast. At Bexhill there was already the signalling station on Galley Hill, for which the cottages still there (at the time of writing) were built, and later the semaphore station at Signal (Kewhurst) House, as well as one adjacent to Martello Tower No. 55 near the Pevensey parish boundary. The Kewhurst house was evidently relinquished when the Admiralty took over the Coastguard service from the Board of Customs under the Coastguard Act of 1856, and from shortly afterwards until 1878 it was the home of the Rev. (later Canon) J. H. Simpson, successively curate and rector of St. Mark's Church, Little Common, for 53 years. When he went into residence the musket racks were still there and the signalling pole stood outside.

New coastguard stations required at Bexhill because of the 1831 change were initially found in the use of two of the Martello towers, this adaptation being first mentioned in an 1839 Customs return. The first cottages as living accommodation, together with watch- and store-rooms, were built in 1832 and would seem to have been privately erected, for at the time of the transfer of the service to the Admiralty in 1856 a return of premises compiled by the area Customs and Excise collector, who was based at Rye, showed that they were held on 21-year leases from Mr. Edward Maynard. These establishments eventually became the Bexhill and Kewhurst (Cooden) coastguard stations. The Act of 1856 acknowledged the end of large-scale smuggling across the Channel and recognised the increasing importance of safety at sea. The Coastguard personnel were thenceforward part of the 1st Naval Reserve whose duties included looking after shipwrecks, operating lifeboats and other rescue services and generally policing the coast. These protective measures were necessitated by the great increase in seaborne trade during the 19th century, much of it inshore shipping which declined only with the advent of larger steam vessels able to keep to the more open waters in bad weather. Hitherto the

shallow bays were resorted to for shelter and the rescue operations of the coastguards not infrequently required.

The earliest example of seaborne trade to Bexhill had been that of the collier *Phoenix* which, laden with coal, used to be beached opposite the end of Sea Road and its cargo fetched up to the Old Town by farm wagons. This practice prevailed until the coming of the railway in 1846. Up to the end of the last century Hastings Corporation levied dues on incoming coal, which was why the former Hastings gas works at Glyne Gap were established just over the Bexhill boundary. The name of Wallsend which survives at Pevensey, although presumed by some to mark the end of an ancient sea wall across the marsh, is held by others to derive from Wallsend-on-Tyne from where coal was brought by sea and unshipped at Pevensey for farm carts to carry to the great houses of the hinterland.

At Bexhill, boating from the shore was a feature of the young resort in the later Victorian age, and the best-known vessel was the *Skylark,* owned by Mr. James Gold who built the large seafront property between Sea and Brassey Roads. Earlier in life he had run supplies for the army in the Crimean War. By the early 1890s the bathing and boating station of Mr. John Hunnisett was popular; his obituary notice described him as a 'hard-working man much given to minding his own business and leaving other people alone', and when his funeral procession passed along the seafront the *Skylark's* flag was placed at half-mast. Hunnisett's bathing station, which became that of Ashworth and Hunnisett and was later acquired by the Bexhill Bathing Company Limited, was originally built from the timbers of the sailing vessel *Isabella,* wrecked at Bexhill in 1883. In December 1910 the station was destroyed by a storm which carried the timbers out to the sea whence they had come.

Into the 1890s means of communication between the coastguard stations and with passing shipping remained by flags and semaphore; the nearest telegraph wire ran from Beachy Head to Lloyds in London via East Dean. It was complained that usually no signals from the *Royal Sovereign* lightship were discernible ashore, while at night news of a disaster could only be conveyed from one coastguard station to the next by foot messenger, 'who might take an hour on a stormy night'. In 1892 the House of Commons passed a resolution for the equipping of coastguard and signalling stations with telephone and telegraphic means of communication.

During these years the popularity of the coastguard station on The Horn, where the De La Warr Pavilion is now, was at its height. It was a focal point of the developing resort in the 1880s and 1890s, the officer and his men, all naval veterans, honouring ceremonial occasions with a display of arms and equipment, together with the full naval dressing of the station, where a distinguishing feature was the tall flagstaff in the centre of ornamental stones which indicated the points of the compass. The guardroom, lined with cutlasses, revolvers and rifles, was a grimmer attraction. The crew of the station were always willing to oblige inquirers about

the Channel and the passage of vessels upon it, and it must be remembered that the inshore waters formed a scene of much greater activity and interest than they do today. As the only uniformed force in the town, the coastguards would turn out as a guard of honour at local events of importance, a duty later taken over by the Volunteer Fire Brigade.

When the Admiralty reviewed the coastguard duties early in the present century (soon after which the service was placed under the Board of Trade) several of the Bexhill dwellings, then newly built and which had replaced the original small white-washed cottages, were let to civilian tenants, but the standard of accommodation was criticised in a *Daily News* article in 1912 which described the coastguard houses as of a style 'long discarded by all but the stingiest of builders'. After the first world war the service came under the scrutiny of the Geddes economy 'axe' and as a result of an inquiry in 1922 control of the coastguards was again vested in the Maritime Section of the Board of Trade, with reversion to the Admiralty in time of war.

The changed conditions afloat, however, and economy at home caused many coastguard stations to be closed, including the two surviving at Bexhill. The first to go was at Normans Bay where ten cottages and the officer's house (which are still occupied), watch-house, boat-house and rocket-house, all on a site of two acres, were sold in 1926. It was partly for the coastguards and their families at Normans Bay that Canon Simpson had been instrumental in building St. James' Church there on land given by the Duke of Devonshire in 1866, the building, under a special dispensation, also serving as a school. The coastguard station on the De La Warr Pavilion site was closed with the departure, almost unnoticed, of the last coastguard in 1930 and the buildings and site were acquired by the Corporation, the cottages demolished, and the Pavilion built five years later. The duties of the Bexhill station were shared between Eastbourne and St. Leonards, and the Board of Trade appointed Mr. W. Buxton and his son as coast watchers to be on duty during heavy storms. The last coastal watch at Bexhill was that of a volunteer force which manned Galley Hill in severe weather, succeeding the auxiliary service operated for some years after the second world war by Mr. S. J. Naylor until he retired in 1964.

The first *Royal Sovereign* lightship of Trinity House was stationed on the reef of that name, 11 miles off Bexhill, in 1875, two years after an Admiralty survey of the Channel. In 1968 the project of a light tower to replace the vessel was undertaken and the work carried out at Newhaven. The Sovereign reef was chosen for this experiment because of its important navigational position and the favourable conditions of the sea bed. The installation was completed in 1971.

Apart from those of the *Amsterdam* and *Isabella* already noted, the following shipwrecks of interest to Bexhill may be listed:

In November 1891, during one of the worst gales for many years, the

Bexhill and Kewhurst coastguards assisted in rescues from the German barque *Pyffinger,* bound from San Francisco to Bremen, which went ashore at St. Leonards;

The following February the French brigantine *Francois-Joseph* grounded off Kewhurst but was re-floated and taken to Rye by a Bexhill crew whom the French consul entertained to dinner in recognition of their efforts, and paid their fares home;

In 1902 much of the wreckage of the *Robert Ingram,* run down off Beachy Head, was washed ashore at Bexhill, and a flagstaff was made from one of its masts;

The collision in 1912 between the P & O liner *Oceana,* outward bound for India, which sank with £750,000 of bullion aboard, and a German schooner was seen from Bexhill and many pathetic remains were washed on to the local beach, including the body of a lascar seaman;

The following year the Lowestoft drifter *Gamester* was beached at Bexhill after damage at sea, an event long remembered for the great speed at which the torpedo-destroyer *Empress* appeared over the horizon on the way to her assistance;

In 1963 the burnt-out hull of the Lebanese freighter *Aghios Georgios II* attracted thousands of sightseers to Normans Bay where she had been run aground after catching fire off Eastbourne.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Hotels and Inns

APART FROM THE Bell, an old posting house modernised in 1888, there was no public establishment in Bexhill to offer accommodation until the Castle and Devonshire hotels were both built in 1886. The Bell was for many years the meeting place of the local community, its assembly room also used as a small theatre by touring players, and being the scene of a memorable occasion in June 1819 when 25 elderly men were entertained to dinner to celebrate the birthday of King George III, the chair being taken by a veteran of 84. Later in the century it was insisted that the public inquiry into Bexhill's application for local government powers should be held at the Bell as the recognised meeting place of the village. Among its patrons in later years was Bennett Burleigh, the famous war correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*, and who died there in 1914.

Besides the Bell, licensed premises included the old-established Queen's Head (formerly called the Black Horse) in Belle Hill, the Wheatsheaf at Little Common (re-built in 1886), the Denbigh (modernised much later), and the New and Sussex inns at Sidley. The Castle, originally intended to be called the Windsor Castle (Windsor was a Christian name in the De La Warr family as well as having royal associations), early became a meeting place for the friendly societies formed with the growth of the town. The Devonshire, which soon became the 'local' for the new Bexhill south of the railway, as the Castle was for the London Road area to the north, was built by Mr. John Webb who developed the Egerton Park estate, and he was the first licensee. In 1892 the hotel was sold to the Sewell family in whose ownership it remained for more than 40 years, being enlarged in 1929, until disposed of in 1934 to a brewery company by Mr. R. C. Sewell who was prominent in the civic and sporting life of the town for half a century and became mayor and a freeman of the borough. For many years the Devonshire was a venue for social functions and meetings, possessing in its ballroom the best dance floor in Bexhill, and it was a much respected hotel in the best traditions, with an influential part in local life. It was closed as a hotel in 1957.

The sea-front hotels catered for holiday visitors, whereas the Castle, Devonshire, and indeed the Bell, became increasingly 'commercial', as the business life of the town expanded. It is extraordinary, however, that all the major hotel building for the holiday trade was carried out within some 12 years, between the start of the Sackville in 1890 and the completion of the Granville in 1902, though because of licensing objections the latter was not opened for another three years. The Sackville, which became one of the leading hotels on the south coast, attracting many distinguished visitors (including Lord Curzon when he was Viceroy of India), was an early enterprise of the 7th Earl De La Warr for whom Mr. Webb built the East Parade and so started the new town. Nearly all the early sea front hotels were built on the De La Warr estate, that is the De La Warr and East Parades, Mr. Webb's development westwards concentrating on trade and residential properties. The Sackville was originally a row of four dwellings incorporated into the hotel which was opened with much ceremony by Lord De La Warr in July 1890 and marked the beginning of the fashionable resort which flourished until the first world war. His son and heir, Viscount Cantelupe, resided there until he and his wife moved into the restored Manor House in 1892. In 1897 the family disposed of the Sackville to Frederick Hotels Ltd. which owned it for 60 years. A suite of stately public rooms was added in 1900 and these formed the setting for most of the town's principal social functions for many years contributing an atmosphere of distinction long remembered. To many, sometimes scattered over the world and mostly servants of the old British Empire, Bexhill meant the Sackville and it brought the nostalgia of home. In 1920 a lounge and promenade were added to the main frontage. The Sackville declined, as did many once great establishments along the coast, largely from the change in holiday fashions between the world wars, when ladies no longer brought their families and maids to stay for a month while paterfamilias came at weekends; later the closure of independent schools in the town led to a diminution of parental patronage. Passing through several ownerships after Frederick Hotels sold it in 1957, and with the contents auctioned in 1960, the property was eventually purchased in 1963 for conversion into flats. Its closure as a hotel had marked the end of an era for Bexhill, a fact appreciated by the Corporation which made unavailing efforts to preserve an establishment that had virtually represented the town to the world through three generations.

The completion of the large block of sea-front property between Sea and Brassey Roads in 1893 allowed the opening of Glyne Hall Hotel, which later advertised as the 'oldest boarding house in the town'; two years later the handsome block between Brassey and Middlesex Roads gave further hotel accommodation; still eastwards the Riposo (demolished in 1961 to make way for flats) was a popular family hotel for many years, while Wilton Court, just west of Sea Road, which opened in 1900 continued as a hotel for 70 years. Because of its banqueting suite and ornate public rooms the chief competition to the Sackville Hotel came from the Metropole which was built between 1897 and 1900 on the site of the present putting

green west of the De La Warr Pavilion. This lavishly furnished hotel was well patronised, and the Lord Mayor of London stayed there in 1906 when he came in state with the sheriffs to open the Egerton Park extension. Occupied by the armed forces (as were most of the hotels during the second world war, and some during the first one), the Metropole suffered a serious fire in 1940 and was bombed the next year, the derelict building being later bought by the Corporation and demolished in 1955. The unattractive west end of the De La Warr Pavilion results from the proximity of the hotel when the Pavilion was designed in 1934.

Before the Metropole, however, there was built in 1895 the Marine Hotel on the site at the corner of Devonshire Road and Marina now occupied by Dalmore Court. This had only a short life as a hotel, becoming in 1903 a holiday home for members of the drapery trade and known as Roberts Marine Mansions from the name of the donor. It remained such until the second world war during which it was bombed and was demolished as unsafe in 1954, Dalmore Court being opened seven years later. As the Marine Hotel it had a niche in local history for a discussion there in 1898 led to the campaign which gained Bexhill its character of incorporation four years afterwards. The Granville Hotel, owned by Trust Houses Ltd. for a long period, was built in 1902, but the justices' refusal of a bar licence on the grounds that there were then facilities at the nearby Central Station, delayed the opening until 1905. This was the last major purpose-built hotel in Bexhill.

Inland, the early growth of the town had justified the building of the York Hotel, London Road, in 1895, together with the adjoining York Hall which was a centre of entertainment for many years. When the construction of the Bexhill West to Crowhurst branch railway line brought prosperity to Sidley at the turn of the century, the same proprietor, Mr. J. P. Goodwin (whose father had kept the Queen's Head for many years and built the town's first drill hall for the Volunteers), built the Pelham Hotel, supporting his application by the contention that there was no stabling to be had at Sidley and the hotel would provide stalls, loose boxes and carriage houses. At this time also the old Sussex beerhouse opposite the ancient New Inn was rebuilt into the present structure. The only public house licence granted since then was for the new Turkey Inn, Turkey Road, in 1956, although the refreshment room of the former West Station has long been a popular 'local' for that part of the town.

Proposals to develop the De La Warr estate at Cooden before the first world war included a plan for a large hotel on the east side of Cooden Sea Road, south of where Cooden Drive now runs. This never materialised, and the present Cooden Beach Hotel, dating from 1931, resulted from the conversion of three of a row of shops. It was long owned and conducted by the De La Warr family, and the 9th Earl entertained King George V and Queen Mary there, as well as the Duke and Duchess of York (afterwards King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, now the

Queen Mother), while Princess Elizabeth (now Her Majesty the Queen) and Princess Margaret came from Eastbourne to play on the sands nearby. Another visitor was Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, then Prime Minister, who came for a golfing holiday.

After the second world war Bexhill, like many resorts, enjoyed a boom period catering for visitors who had not been able to come to the seaside for five years, but the change in holiday fashions brought about by family motoring and holidays abroad, coupled with staff difficulties which caused many proprietors to convert their establishments into flats, led to a severe contraction of the hotel industry in the town during the 1960s. The Bexhill Hotels Association was formed in 1933 and it is an indication of the effect of the second world war on the town that its membership fell from 140 to 18. The post-war revival of the association was marked by the celebration of its silver jubilee in 1958. In the halcyon days of the late Victorian and Edwardian age the local newspapers published visitors lists which recorded the names of those staying at the various hotels and boarding houses, surviving copies of these publications providing a unique record of those sedate years.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Community Life

FROM A COMMUNITY point of view Bexhill was happy in the time of its chief expansion. The latter years of the 19th century saw the increasing practice of those virtues of thrift and hard work, together with a more practical concern for the less fortunate, which together gave a civic unity in a reflection of the growing national greatness. The historian Trevelyan wrote that these were years of prosperity in which most sections of the community shared: 'The Queen's jubilees of 1887 and 1897 were celebrated by all classes with real pride and thankfulness, due in part to a sense of delivery from the conditions endured at the beginning of her reign . . . manners were gentler, streets were safer, conditions of labour had improved, but unemployment, sickness and old age still had terrors for the workman'.

The impact of war was considerable. The Napoleonic struggle which established coast defences and brought the King's German Legion camp to the village caused Bexhill to become more widely known and it never reverted to the isolated village of earlier times. The 19th century expansion saw its climax in the influence of the De La Warr family with other gentry and moneyed residents, but the Earl's break with the town when he suddenly departed for the South African War opened the way for new leaderships which flourished until the first world war. This again altered the town's character by a further step along the democratic road, and if the ladies bountiful became fewer and less well endowed, the subsequent years saw a beneficial broadening of the basis of community life. This in turn served its generation until the civilian exodus of the second world war marked another watershed in local history. Many who had given leadership never returned, so that when peace came again civic and social life came to be directed by a generation of different outlook, many of whom had been schooled in the harsh experience of wartime Bexhill. Nevertheless the borough continued to depend largely on those who retired to the town and brought with them a tradition of voluntary service. This strength enabled Bexhill to maintain standards greatly superior to many places. Social legislation increasingly made official much service that had hitherto been

done voluntarily, but this national change was necessitated by a dearth elsewhere of that spirit which had for long been Bexhill's special pride. All these changes have left their mark on the local character.

At Little Common a Benevolent Society existed as early as 1841, while with the growth of the 1880s the Ancient Order of Foresters, the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes and the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows were established in Bexhill and there was also a Workmen's Benefit Slate Club. In the next decade an agency of the Tunbridge Wells Equitable Friendly Society was started, and for many years all these and kindred organisations joined in an annual church parade which was a feature of the town's ceremonial year. Freemasonry came with the transfer of the Hadrian Lodge from Pevensey in 1895, though not until 1931 did the Craft have its own temple in Wilton Road, since used by several lodges and degrees under the United Grand Lodge of England.

For many years the Church continued to exert a strong influence on social work and the parish nurse, aided by district visitors, was the forerunner of much of the official welfare of today. The first world war brought a greater awareness and even a sense of shame at the extent of poverty, distress and ill-health which those years revealed especially among families whose menfolk went to the service of their country. In Bexhill the Nursing Association was formed, tuberculosis, maternity and child welfare clinics opened, and in 1933 a Central Aid Council, which after the second world war became the Council of Social Service, co-ordinated the work of various local societies. In 1935 the Countess De La Warr, as mayoress, opened its Jubilee House, so called from the silver jubilee that year of King George V's reign, and which offered accommodation at cheap rentals to elderly ladies who had no homes of their own. Not for another generation was anything comparable undertaken by the municipality or private societies formed for the purpose.

From the beginning of the 1939–45 war a Citizens Advice Bureau advised on a wide range of social problems, and after the war the increasing proportion of elderly residents, many without family help, brought further emphasis to service of this kind. The Women's Voluntary Service (later 'Royal'), formed in 1939 organised among other activities a delivery of 'meals on wheels' to lonely invalids, and in 1970, with the financial help of the Friends of the Elderly, Rotary Club, and others adapted premises in Amherst Road for a centre which also offered dining and club facilities. The Friends of the Elderly, founded in 1958, was an off-shoot of the Council of Social Service, subsequently becoming independent, and promoting the Senior Citizens Club, which, with social and dining rooms, is among the pioneers in this field. All these efforts, stimulating the social conscience of the town, nevertheless left some gaps in the sphere of personal service and an attempt to meet these needs was made with the formation of the Caring Community. Apart from its immense wartime efforts the Red Cross has continued to give that invaluable help which it has maintained since it was started as part of the Rye organisation in 1910,

the movement in this country being initially formed on the basis of the parliamentary constituencies.

For many years various clubs have contributed to the social life of the town, while in the early days of the seaside resort library and reading rooms were popular. The first was started in 1895 and the next year similar facilities were provided with the opening of the Kursaal. In 1879 Mr. Lambert Walker built a Working Men's Club in Holliers Hill, now incorporated into the present extended premises to which the club returned in 1931 after temporary disbandment. The Reading Room and Institute, which became a Church Army centre and has since 1965 been part of the Youth Centre in Station Road, originally formed the town's commemoration of Queen Victoria's golden jubilee in 1887. (Another memorial was the Old Town clock.) In the next decade came the Marine Club, run in conjunction with the Rowing Club, but although it recovered from a serious fire in 1900 it closed eight years later and in 1910 the premises were demolished in preparing the site for the Colonnade. The same year saw the opening of the New Club, now known as the Bexhill Club after several changes of name and ownership.

In political life a Conservative Room existed at one of the wooden properties in Barrack Road which dated from Napoleonic times and were demolished in 1962 to make way for a projected A259 trunk road by-pass of the Old Town. In 1891 a Conservative club supplanted it in London Road and in 1906 the present club in Amherst Road, which has been extended and modernised, was opened by Mr. G. L. Courthope, then the new Member of Parliament for the Rye division. The local Liberal organisation had club premises in Station Road in the 1890s but the present Liberal Centre is a much later development.

For ex-Servicemen the British Legion (Comrades) Club in London Road had its origin after the first world war in local welfare work for a United Services Fund. The premises, since enlarged, were opened in 1922 by a blind holder of the Victoria Cross and named O'Donnell House after the brigadier-general who unveiled the Marina war memorial and became the first president of the Bexhill Branch of the British Legion (pre-fixed 'Royal' British Legion in 1971 to mark its golden jubilee). The inclusion of the word 'Comrades' in the club title is a reminder of a now almost forgotten organisation of ex-servicemen which amalgamated with the Legion. A 'post' of the Comrades was formed at Little Common in 1919, becoming a separate branch of the British Legion with club premises opened in 1923 by Cyril Maude, the famous actor-manager, who resided in Barnhorn Road.

An outstanding development since the second world war has been the Community Association movement of which the pioneer was Canon W. Godfrey Bell, Rector of St. Peter's from 1941 until his death in 1953. During the war he inspired a scheme to provide a community centre as a memorial for youth, to recognise the comradeship of the war and carry this spirit into the peace. The St. Peter's

Association was formed in 1946, using the old church hall, and the present Centre, incorporating that building, was completed in 1955.

The Little Common association had several meeting places from 1946 until purchasing the site of its present home, towards which a generous donation was made by Mr. J. B. Sainsbury, principal of the well-known grocery firm which bears his name, and who then resided at The Thatched House. The Centre, opened in 1958 by his son, now Lord Sainsbury, commemorates the inspiration and generosity of the father. It was extended three years later and in 1967 the original plans were completed with the addition of a theatre equipped to professional standards.

The Community Association and Centre at Sidley derive from a local effort in sending parcels to evacuated children and then to prisoners of war. Its headquarters since 1948 have been at Sidley House which was built in the middle of the last century, enlarged in 1922, and bought by the Corporation shortly before the second world war. It has been extended three times, largely through the voluntary efforts of the Association. With the residential growth in the Pebsham area an association was formed there in 1967 in the hope of providing a centre for communal activities.

Bexhill has been associated with the Rotary movement since 1923, the local club receiving its charter that July. It has always been closely allied to the community life of the borough and initiated a number of activities whose origin became forgotten as they functioned independently. One of its first endeavours, at a time of much unemployment, was to form a Boys Work Committee and in 14 years nearly 100 boys were prepared for technical training in industry. The club also pioneered the formation of the Central Aid Council (the Council of Social Service) and promoted the first local Safety First Committee. Its most notable years were those of the second world war when it took charge of entertainment and provided sports equipment and comforts for thousands of troops in the area. Not only were entertainments staged at the De La Warr Pavilion, but Rotarians visited outlying searchlight and anti-aircraft posts and held 'absent friends' services with every Bexhillian serving in the Armed Forces being sent regular newsletters. In 1955, commemorating the golden jubilee of Rotary International, the club presented a town diary of events board which is displayed at the De La Warr Pavilion.

Associated with the Rotary movement, a Women's Wheel of Service for the wives of members, taking its title from the Rotary emblem, was formed in 1924 and, now known as the Inner Wheel, is the senior club in the East Sussex and Kent district. One of its most notable achievements was the provision of a scented garden for the blind in Egerton Park, and which has been copied by many other towns.

The Round Table, an association for professional and businessmen of a younger generation, has been active in the town since 1948, organised the impres-

sive ceremony of a symbolic flame at the local Coronation celebrations in 1953, sponsored the town carnival for some years and staged an ambitious pageant to commemorate the 900th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings in 1966, apart from undertaking much charitable work. An active Ladies Circle has the relationship to the Round Table that the Inner Wheel has to the Rotary movement.

For more than 60 years a powerful impact was made by the Bexhill Lecture Society, founded in 1907 at St. George's Presbyterian Church, and which was for many years among the leading societies of its kind in the country. Until the counter-attraction of television in the 1960s its winter lectures drew audiences of more than a thousand people. With it will always be linked the names of Mrs. C. I. Meads, secretary for half a century, and the Rev. Dr. F. E. England, minister of St. George's Church, who was chairman for more than 30 years, and who were instrumental in obtaining visits from many distinguished speakers.

One of the most important modern influences in town life began at the end of the second world war with the formation of the Association of Bexhill Citizens which has provided a growing cultural element with luncheon and lecture meetings as well as a social programme of wide interests. In promoting civic development it has to some extent taken the place of the old Town and Borough Associations which flourished in the early years of the century.

Local seniority in the Women's Institute movement is claimed by that at Little Common which was formed in 1934, and has, since the second world war, been followed by branches at Cooden and Sidley. The Townswomen's Guild movement began in the town with the formation of two guilds in 1946, now increased to five. Other women's organisations include a local branch of the National Council of Women, the Soroptimists Club, and a branch of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs whose International Night and candle-lighting ceremony, at which many countries of the world are remembered, has become one of the borough's most impressive winter functions.

The interests of the trading community were organised in 1907 by the formation of a Commercial Association (later Society), re-constituted as the Chamber of Commerce in 1948. After the second world war the expansion of shopping facilities at Sidley led to the inauguration in 1959 of a Traders Association for that area.

For many years a notable contribution to social progress and prosperity has been made by the building society movement and the first local society was formed in 1888. The present Bexhill-on-Sea Building Society dates from 1914, and after surviving the difficulties of the first world war was able to open its present offices in 1926. Other building societies with strong local connections include the Hastings and Thanet which, in addition, transferred its administrative section to Bexhill in 1960, taking over and greatly extending the former Royal Merchant Navy School in Collington Avenue. These offices were opened by the

Marquess of Exeter who, as Lord Burghley, formerly resided at Catsfield and was a joint master of the East Sussex Hunt. An older generation will remember him as an Olympic hurdles champion in the 1920s.

From the day when Bexhill obtained local government powers there have been societies watchful of municipal activities and intended to promote the interests of the town. As early as 1888 there were Ratepayers, Mutual Improvement and Progress Associations, and in the years of the Urban Council a Town Association was formed which was re-titled the Borough Association when Bexhill was granted its municipal charter in 1902. A second ratepayers association was formed in 1912, primarily to oppose a £20,000 municipal scheme to construct a winter garden, and generally to seek economy in the borough rate levy. This association was re-formed in 1919 as the New Ratepayers' Association and continued until the large-scale civilian evacuation during the second world war. It sponsored candidates for the Town Council and led opposition to the De La Warr Pavilion scheme in the 1930s which resulted in government auditors exonerating the Town Council and its officers, with the exception that a payment of £44 was disallowed out of a total contract of £70,000. Nevertheless as a result of the controversy three retiring aldermen were ousted from the Council at the 1937 annual meeting and another consequence was that Earl De La Warr, who had largely encouraged the Pavilion scheme and had been mayor almost until the completion of the building, declined the offer of the honorary freedom of the borough which he so richly deserved. After the second world war there was little organised influence by ratepayers' societies until a Protection Committee was formed in the early 1960s, and in 1963 this became the present Ratepayers and Residents Association which has secured the return of several candidates to the Town Council.

The social life of Bexhill first centred on the Bell Hotel where an assembly room also served as a theatre. For a time there was later a small assembly hall on the upper floor of a building in Station Road, now part of Caffyns' garage showrooms, and for which an entertainment licence was granted in 1892. With the growth of the town south of the railway the Devonshire, Sackville and later Metropole hotels all became venues for major social functions, the oldest surviving of these being the Tradesmen's Ball. Except for wartime interruption, this has been held annually since 1902, though the title first appeared in that of a Volunteer and Tradesmen's Ball organised by the local battery of the Cinque Ports Artillery Volunteers and business people in 1889.

The record of mayoral banquets has been a chequered one, originating in a complimentary dinner in the days of the Urban Council. After the lavish mayoral banquets in the first decade of the century the most notable were those of the 9th Earl De La Warr in 1932–35, when the principal guests included Ministers of the Crown in the personages of Lord Sankey, Sir John Simon and Mr. Walter Elliot.

After a lapse of many years the banquets were revived in 1956 to honour Mrs. J. O. Alexander at the conclusion of her second year of office, and this style of function continued until the closure of the Sackville Hotel deprived the town of its splendid suite of public rooms for such occasions. In recent years mayoral banquets on varying scales have been held at the De La Warr Pavilion.

Among organisations catering for special interests the Bexhill and District Scottish Society has flourished since 1949 and its annual Burns Nicht honours the 'Immortal Memory'.

Of outdoor events the oldest, and still one of the most popular social and sporting institutions, is the annual Horse Show. First held in 1903, it originally included a parade of tradesmen's and other horse-drawn turn-outs, and the mounted marshal for many years was one of the town's characters, Mr. Richard Povey, who lived to be 92. Among other events which he marshalled were the welcome procession to the 8th Earl De La Warr on his return from the South African War, the procession in which the charter of incorporation was carried through the town in 1902, and, as his last such public appearance, the Peace Day procession of 1919.

The summer of 1933 saw the introduction of a Gala Week to prolong the season, improve town publicity and raise money for Bexhill Hospital which had been opened that year. Its first secretary was Mr. H. Riley who a few years earlier had become secretary of the revived Rowing Club and regatta. To his subsequent long service in social and welfare work became added an aldermancy of the East Sussex County Council and a well-deserved Order of the British Empire in the 1969 New Year Honours. Gala Week formed the pattern for the town carnival when it was started after the second world war and organised for some years by the Round Table until taken over by a local committee.

In earlier days such youth work as existed was almost entirely dependent on the Church and its schools. It was customary for the curates of a parish, then more numerous than today, to foster this interest and many of these young clerics, during years when outdoor sport was much in vogue and the team spirit encouraged, played in local football and cricket elevens. This example did much to encourage many, often from poor homes, into a respectable way of life, and although resources were primitive by modern standards, social work of great value was achieved. Indeed many who made good in life owed their success to this source and were not ashamed to admit it. In addition the leaders and teachers of the Sunday schools were often those who had taught in the day schools during the week and thus offered a constant example of Christian influence.

When patriotism was in vogue uniformed organisations flourished, again often directly associated with church life, while with the new century came the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. The introduction of scouting to Bexhill was the registration of the Kangaroo Patrol of the 1st Bexhill troop in 1908 and the next

year a number of boys went into camp at Rye. The Girl Guide movement started locally in 1912 and the first divisional commissioner was the future Lady Baden-Powell who became County Commissioner for Sussex and later Chief Guide. She was succeeded as divisional commissioner in 1917 by Lady Henniker Heaton who resided in Bexhill and whose husband was a well-known Member of Parliament. In between the world wars the Guide movement in the town was largely directed by Miss F. H. Burrows, for many years Principal and afterwards Warden of Ancaster House School.

A memorable occasion was Empire Day 1927, then still observed with much loyalty as the anniversary of Queen Victoria's birthday. (An older generation will remember the customary parades in the school playground with the ceremonial unfurling of the Union Jack and the singing of the National Anthem.) That year marked the silver jubilee of the borough, and the mayor, Sir Ernest Birch, a distinguished former colonial governor, organised a demonstration of young people for which some 2,000 children assembled in Polegrove. He himself attended in his mayoral robes and wearing his chain of office, and was received by a guard of honour composed of Scouts and the Church Lads Brigade, an organisation which was for many years especially strong at St. Barnabas' Church under the captaincy of Mr. F. E. Poulton, headmaster of the church's boys school and a leading layman in local religious life for 60 years.

After the second world war an increasing demand for more up-to-date facilities resulted in 1964 in a mayoral appeal by Alderman E. H. Corke for funds to convert the old Church Army building in Station Road into a modern Youth Centre. This scheme, aided by public funds, was completed the following year, the new building including a clock given by friends in memory of Dr. R. J. Toleman, a former Borough Medical Officer and stalwart in youth work for many years.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Bexhill in Wartime

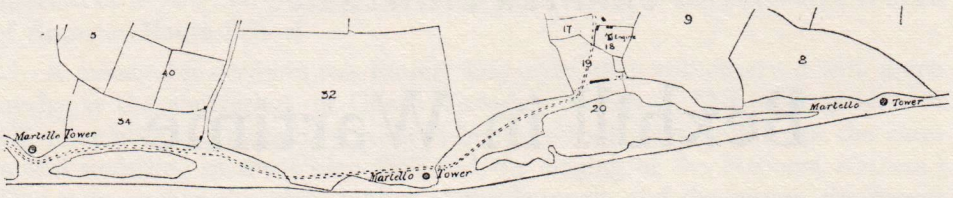
FROM THE SETTLEMENT of the Manor of Bexhill on the Sackville family in 1570 a rural peace lasted almost undisturbed for more than 200 years. Few references of importance occur. It was a notable exception when a freak storm swept across the parish in May 1729 causing such destruction that it was the subject of a London-printed pamphlet. The village also shared in the excitement of the wreck at Bulverhythe in 1748 of the outward-bound Dutch East Indiaman *Amsterdam* from which much valuable cargo was saved.

The routine of local life, dominated by the Church, the manor, parish vestry and the agricultural year, was more permanently disturbed by the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars at the end of the 18th century. In the 1790s the Admiralty established a signalling station on Galley Hill, a vantage point commanding a nearly 50-mile sweep of the English Channel. Its early equipment consisted of a red flag, blue pendant and four balls of black-painted canvas stretched on hoops three feet four inches in diameter. This method of signalling along the coast was supplanted in 1820 by the semaphore system for which there was a station at Signal (afterwards renamed Kewhurst) House, now made into flats, on the rising ground between Bexhill and Little Common, and another near The Sluice (Normans Bay). In 1794 an Act of Parliament authorised the raising of volunteer defence companies, the Sussex coast being in the Southern District, one of twelve in the kingdom.

MARTELLO TOWERS

The threat of a French invasion, finally removed by Nelson's victory at Trafalgar, was further met by the famous Martello Towers, so-called from Mortella Bay, in Corsica, where a similar fort had successfully defied British warships in 1794. Such towers were first suggested for the defence of the Sussex and Kent coasts in 1803, and 74 were built between Folkestone and Seaford. Of the 47 towers in Sussex, 12 stood along the Bexhill parish foreshore from Galley Hill to the Pevensey boundary, numbered 44 to 55 from east to west. The towers from

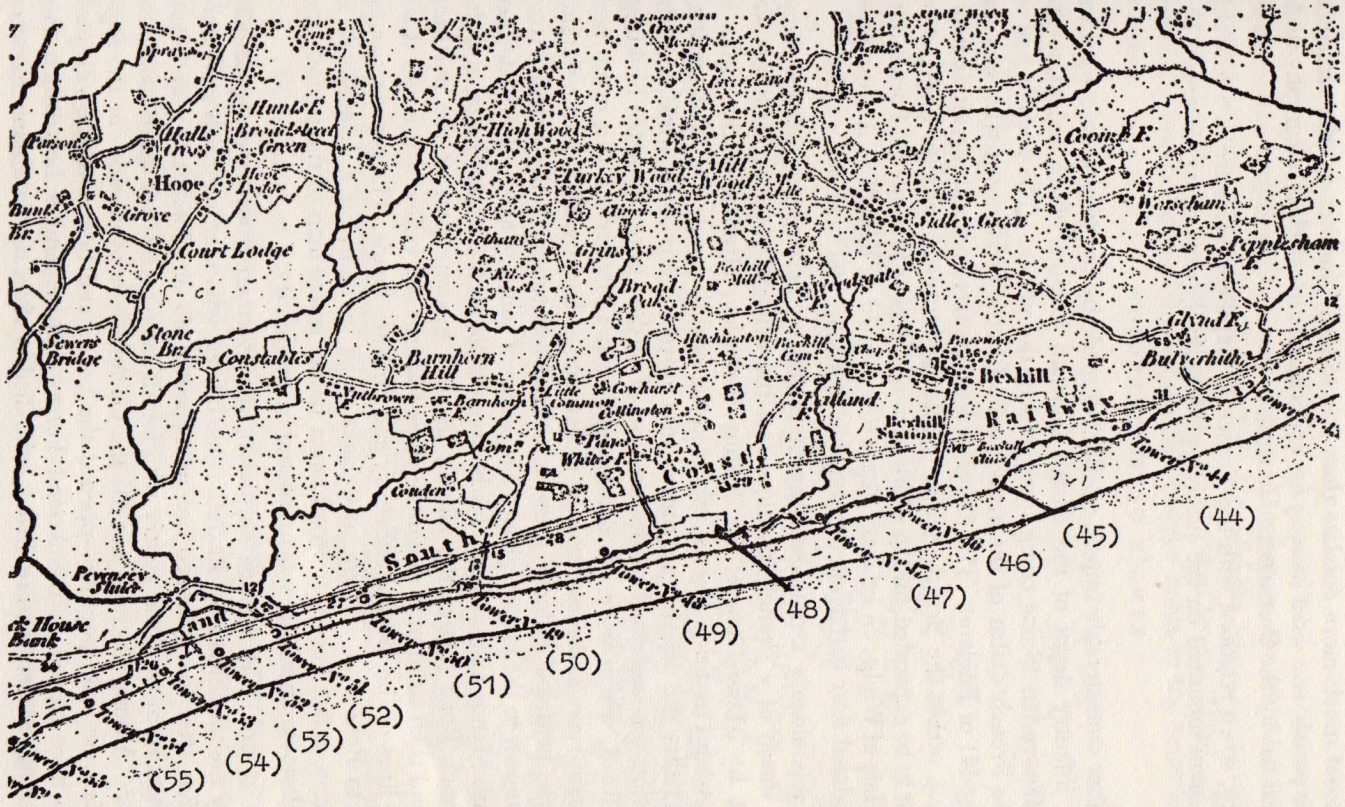
Bexhill to Eastbourne were built by a Hastings contractor, 'Yorky' Smith, who as a young man, had walked to London from his home town of Leeds. Each tower was surmounted by a 24-pounder gun and the towers were so sited that cross-fire could be brought to bear on any invasion craft. The guns were manned by artillery batteries of which the nearest local ones were based at Hastings and Eastbourne.



X. — The three most easterly Martello towers at Bexhill, those at Galley Hill, near the site of the 'Sackville', and where the Colonnade now is, as shown on the Bexhill Manor map of 1806.

An illustration of the Bexhill towers, in which some artistic licence is evident, was made by the famous painter J. W. M. Turner, who was a guest during those years at Petworth House, Sussex, and it was included in his 'Liber Studiorum' published in 1817. Viewed from the locality of Galley Hill, the drawing depicted seven towers. The sites of the 12 towers in the parish are shown in detail on the Tithe Award Map of 1839, but by that time one of them, Number 45, which stood south of where the Sackville Hotel was later built, had already been undermined by the sea. This was the fate of most of the local towers, whether on the cliffs or foreshore, and the only survivor today is the most westerly one, Number 55, at Normans Bay.

Tower 44 on Galley Hill, which gradually fell to the beach below as the cliff eroded at the end of the last century, was the only one in the parish to have been surrounded by a moat. Number 46, which stood where the Colonnade now is, was demolished in 1870. Number 48, on South Cliff, was demolished in 1858 and its materials used to build a chancel to St. Mark's Church at Little Common where the original structure in 1842 had utilised rubble from Tower 42 at Bulverhythe. Tower 50 at Cooden was a target for two 32-pounder and two 68-pounder guns in an Army artillery demonstration on Cooden Down in March 1860, an event for which the Duke of Cambridge, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and a cousin of Queen Victoria, journeyed by the express train from London, receiving artillery salutes from other Martello towers along the Pevensey Bay foreshore. A crowd of some 5,000 severely taxed the control of the East Sussex Constabulary until dispersed by a shot fired over their heads on the order of the irascible Duke. A small shelter for the use of coastguards and fishermen, known as 'The Bricks', was built from the tower rubble and remained for many years a landmark along a



XI. — The local section, enlarged, of the 1867 revision of the original Ordnance Survey of 1813, showing the positions of the twelve Martello Towers which stood along the Bexhill foreshore, from No. 44 at Galley Hill to No. 55 at Normans Bay. The numbers in parentheses below the original figures are taken from the Tithe Award Map of 1839 and are those after the erection of No. 48 tower which caused a re-numbering of the towers westwards. The site of No. 48 is pointed by a black line, as is that of No. 45 which was an early casualty and not identified on the 1867 revision.

stretch of coast much more desolate than it is today. Number 55, the remaining tower in the parish, was used in 1905 for experiments in wireless telegraphy under a licence granted by the Postmaster-General.

In 1859, when relations with the France of Napoleon III were at a low ebb, guns were again mounted on the surviving Martello Towers along Pevensey Bay.

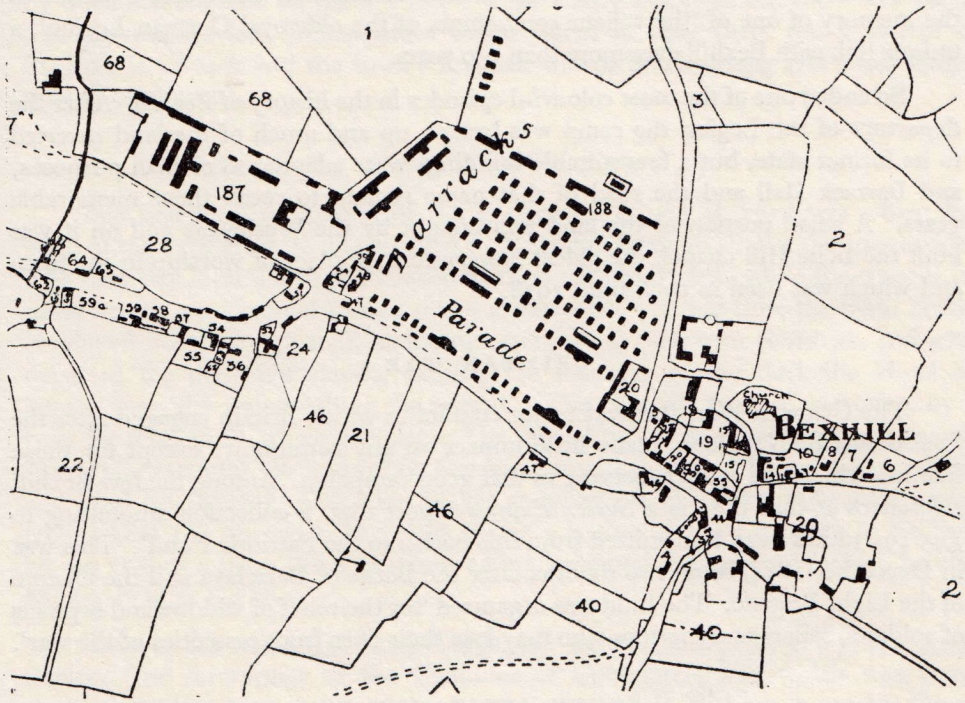
KING'S GERMAN LEGION

The other considerable impact on Bexhill made by the Napoleonic wars was that of the infantry depot of the King's German Legion, which led to several thousand Hanoverian troops being quartered in the parish. The Legion had its origin in the French defeat of the army of the Elector of Hanover who was also King George III of England. The disbanded troops were offered recruitment as a separate force within the British Army. Sufficient numbers came to England for the regiment to be expanded, and in addition to quarters at Weymouth, Portsmouth and on the Isle of Wight, an infantry depot was formed at Bexhill in August 1804. It accommodated four battalions formed into light and line brigades.

There was already a military camp at Bexhill as part of the defence forces against the threat of a French invasion, and the brigade based at Hastings was commanded by Major-General Sir Arthur Wellesley, afterwards the Duke of Wellington, whom tradition asserts inspected the Bexhill camp. Dr. Wills, writing in 1884, says that the parish was 'turned into a great camp of all arms', and the accommodation was increased by the erection of earthen huts. Wooden buildings in Barrack Road, which were not demolished until 1962, served as a camp hospital, recreation room and mess, and the oldest part of Barrack Hall, now a nursing home, was the principal officers' mess, a revered institution of the British Army hitherto unknown to the Hanoverians. The camp of some 25 acres, clearly defined on the Bexhill Manor map of 1806, lay between Belle Hill, Chantry Lane, and the present Barrack Road (hence the name), the last forming part of the northern perimeter, and then continued down the slope towards the valley of London Road between the lines of the present Salisbury and Hillside Roads. The parade ground ran parallel to Belle Hill. There was also a small barracks for a detachment at Little Common, a fact known from a Dorset family estate map of the period, and indeed one Hanoverian soldier was murdered in the vicinity.

Viewed at first with Sussex suspicion, the German troops were gradually 'accepted' by the inhabitants of Bexhill. One officer, who met his death at Waterloo, wrote that after being looked on 'much as we do on Cossacks', they began to receive visits from the local gentry who found them to be 'not quite such outlandish bears'. Among the rank and file the German love of music—for the regimental bands were soon popular—opened the hearts and homes of the villagers, and all who have served in the Armed Forces will remember how much this means in a strange place. 'Squire' Brook, who died in 1890, the dominant character

of Bexhill in the Victorian age, remembered as a little boy hearing the Hanoverian soldiers sing in St. Peter's Church. Likewise the local agricultural community respected the traditional German care of their horses, for which the Hanoverian countryside remains famous to this day. Nor did the local tradesmen disdain to offer their services; one Barnard, landlord of the 'Queen's Head' in Belle Hill, was also a bootmaker and made the Hessian-type boots to the order of the Hanoverians.



XII.—Part of Bexhill Manor map during the Napoleonic Wars, showing the barracks of the King's German Legion.

The registers of St. Peter's Church record the weddings of officers, N.C.O.s and men to Bexhill brides, a number of whom went to Hanover to set up home after the long war was over, but there were also the sad occasions of death and burial. It was for the latter that the now-closed Barrack Road cemetery was opened as an extension of the old parish churchyard. Inquiries are still received from Hanover from those seeking forebears among those who served in the King's German Legion at Bexhill.

Its commanding officer, Lieutenant-General Sir Charles von Alten, is the only German officer to have led a British infantry division, but the best-known of

the officers at Bexhill was Colonel Hugh Halkett, who had transferred from the Scotch Brigade. To relieve the tedium of depot life he sent two companies of Hanoverians to dig in the wreck of the *Amsterdam* at Bulverhythe, but the water soaked in so fast that the attempt had to be abandoned. After the final overthrow of Napoleon at Waterloo, when the Legion was transferred to the army of the Kingdom of Hanover (a dignity conferred on that former electoral state by the Congress of Vienna), Colonel Halkett continued in its service, latterly residing in a fine house which still stands in the centre of Hanover and bears a plaque to the memory of one of 'the valiant combatants of the old royal German Legion', a unique link with Bexhill over more than 150 years.

So ended one of the most colourful episodes in the history of Bexhill. After the departure of the Legion the camp was broken up and much of the land reverted to its former state, but a few suitable buildings were adapted to civilian purposes, and Barrack Hall and the road of that name remain to recall those memorable years. A small portion of the land was bought by the Wesleyans and on it was built the Belle Hill chapel, the oldest Nonconformist place of worship in the town and which was used as such until 1938.

CRIMEAN WAR

The Crimean War, the next major conflict in which Britain engaged after the final defeat of Napoleon, made little impact on any community except for those families which had soldiers serving in that grim campaign. Among the few Bexhill references at that time is a *Sussex Express* report that 'a collection amounting to £45 19s 3d has been transmitted from this parish to the Patriotic Fund'. This was in December 1854, some two months after the Battle of Balaclava and the Charge of the Light Brigade. The fund was organised 'for the relief of widows and orphans of soldiers, sailors and marines who may lose their lives from casualties of the war'.

SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

A number of Volunteers from Bexhill served in the South African War which broke out in 1899, and an early sensation was the sudden departure of the 8th Earl De La Warr as a correspondent for the *Globe* newspaper, now long defunct. Among his fellow passengers on the voyage was Winston Churchill, correspondent for the *Morning Post*, a paper now incorporated in *The Daily Telegraph*. The Earl became a hero in 1900 when he was wounded in trying to rescue an injured trooper and, invalided home, he received a spectacular welcome on arrival at Bexhill. Meanwhile he had not sought re-election to the Urban Council of which he had been chairman, and the next year there was a furore in the town when, having been returned at the head of the poll, he was not elected to the chair, that honour going again to Mr. Walter Smith, who had succeeded him in 1900. In consequence

the Earl and his chief supporter, Mr. Daniel Mayer, resigned from the Council. These were among circumstances that caused the South African War to become a watershed in the development of Bexhill, for Lord De La Warr's position in local affairs, which he had so suddenly relinquished, was never fully recovered, and much of the direction of the town passed to new men in public life.

The town celebrated the relief of Mafeking with all the enthusiasm which caused that word to pass into the English language, a procession being organised by workmen engaged on the extension of the Sackville Hotel, but there was also a thanksgiving service. When peace was declared in 1902 there was a service at St. Peter's Church and the town's reaction was of thanksgiving and relief rather than of celebration.

FIRST WORLD WAR

The first local intimation of the imminence of war in 1914 was when the band of the 15th Hussars was recalled to Aldershot from playing at the Colonnade. The next day local Territorials received their call-up papers, while the passage of naval vessels up-Channel caused much excitement. At that time the main hotels employed many foreign staff, including reservists in their own countries, and who departed for their homelands, causing the manager of the Sackville Hotel to lament that 'the war is killing the season'. The patriotic fervour was offset by a rush for food-stuffs which necessitated an appeal by the Mayor (Alderman Daniel Mayer) for restraint. Because of his German extraction, though he was a naturalised and loyal Englishman, Alderman Mayer resigned the mayoralty soon afterwards, feeling that the townspeople would prefer a native of their country to be first citizen at such a time. This generous action increased the esteem in which he was already held in the borough.

Early in the war a Volunteer Corps was started, backed by the Commercial Society (the forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce) and which was commanded until he himself joined the Army by Mr. H. P. Webber, a notable figure in the business life of Bexhill for many years and who had been captain of the town's water polo team in its greatest days.

The military front saw the establishment of a camp at Cooden where four battalions of the expanded Royal Sussex Regiment were trained. These were raised by Lieutenant-Colonel Claude Lowther, of Herstmonceux Castle (now the Royal Observatory), and were affectionately known as 'Lowther's Lambs'. Their stay in Bexhill was commemorated at the golden jubilee in 1964 when a service was held at Cooden Mount by invitation of Mr. Douglas Young, whose father, Alderman Henry Young, had done much to help the officers and men in 1914. Alderman Young was a noted ironfounder and cast the bronze sphinxes which support Cleopatra's Needle on the Thames Embankment. The railway over the

Sackville Arch is carried by girders from his Pimlico foundry cast some 80 years ago. After the departure of 'Lowther's Lambs' South African batteries trained at Cooden, while a Canadian officers training unit and trench warfare school had headquarters at the Metropole Hotel, the practice ground being south of Cooden Drive where St. Augustine's Church now stands. The Canadians, who were twice inspected by the Duke of Connaught, uncle of King George V and a former Governor-General of Canada, were commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel (afterwards Brigadier) A. C. Critchley, who later became celebrated for introducing greyhound racing into England. He returned to Bexhill at the outbreak of the second world war to command a Royal Air Force initial training wing at the Sackville Hotel.

The town supported two Red Cross hospitals, one at Cantelupe Road controlled by No. 24 Voluntary Aid Detachment of the Sussex Red Cross, and the other by 38 V.A.D. at Cooden, while hospitality was extended to some 200 Belgian refugees from the German invasion of their country. Among other local aspects of the war effort was the ploughing up of part of the Down for allotments and the making of comforts for the wounded and refugees by pupils of the town's schools. The borough's contribution to War Savings was later marked by the presentation of a tank which was exhibited for some years until public sentiment changed.

When the Armistice came in 1918 the Canadian forces were prominent in the thanksgiving celebrations, and the next summer the town observed Peace Day when the Royal Proclamation was read at the Town Hall. A special Ex-Servicemen's Day was held later in the year with great success.

Of the town's war memorials, the first to be unveiled was that at St. Mary Magdalene's Church in November 1919, and which had been designed by the Mayor (Alderman G. H. Gray). The unveiling of Little Common's war memorial in November 1920 was marked by the first official attendance there of the Mayor and Corporation, and the next month the town's memorial at Marina was unveiled by Brigadier-General H. O'Donnell, after whom the British Legion (Comrades) Club in London Road is named. He became president of the Bexhill branch of the Legion on its formation in 1921 and was the first local organiser of Poppy Day.

One war link formed by the town is preserved in the Bayencourt street names at Sidley. Many places adopted devastated French towns and villages, and for Bayencourt in northern France, where the 5th Battalion The Royal Sussex Regiment had been quartered in 1916, Bexhill subscribed to provide a piped water supply, including a water tower. The local effort was greatly fostered by Mr. (afterwards Councillor and Alderman) E. W. Bowrey, and when mayor of the borough in 1924 he led a civic party to Bayencourt for the inauguration ceremony of Bexhill's gift. A further donation was made when it was found that the work had not been completed within the estimate, the second act of generosity being the occasion of another civic visit to the French village.

An account of Bexhill during the second world war must be prefaced by a reference to the air raid precautions undertaken at the Munich crisis in September 1938 when an order to distribute gas-masks was received while the Town Council was in session. In consequence 21,000 respirators were assembled and issued in two days, while trenches were dug as temporary air raid shelters. When war came a year later, civil defence precautions had been greatly advanced, including the reinforcement of the Colonnade with 100,000 sandbags, as one of the 42 public air raid shelters in the borough.

Between August 1940 and the end of hostilities in Europe in May 1945, Bexhill had 51 air raids by piloted planes and 328 high explosive and some thousands of incendiary bombs fell in the town. Twenty-one civilians and one soldier were killed, 74 buildings destroyed, 189 seriously damaged and 2,735 slightly damaged. Among buildings hit were the Town Hall, De La Warr Pavilion, Central Station, Sackville and Metropole Hotels and the Beulah Baptist Church which was saved through the efforts of fire fighters led by the minister. A tip-and-run raid in May 1942 wrecked some business premises in the centre of the town, including the offices and local printing works of the *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer,* and also St. Barnabas' Vicarage. Later in the war, when Bexhill was in 'bomb alley', some 485 flying bombs passed over the town during one period of 24 hours. Several which fell in the borough damaged St. Augustine's Church, the Old Town convalescent home and the Bell Hotel. Early in this crisis Bexhill became a key point in the coastal gunnery defences when the anti-aircraft belt was moved from the southern outskirts of London. This operation was completed in three days and the Chief Signals Officer of Anti-Aircraft Command, Brigadier G. C. Wickins, who was responsible for all the communications, afterwards became a distinguished resident of the town.

In conjunction with the air raid warden service a fire watch was early organised which later became the Fire Guard under the direction of the National Fire Service into which all volunteer brigades such as that at Bexhill were co-ordinated. The first recruits to the Local Defence Volunteers (the L.D.V.) in 1940 formed the nucleus of 'K' Battalion in the East Sussex Command, later becoming the 24th Battalion of the Sussex Home Guard which, in the closing stages of the war, was absorbed into the 23rd (Hastings) Battalion.

At the outbreak of the war Bexhill was a reception centre for more than 700 London schoolchildren, but after the fall of France in 1940 the town became an evacuation area and more than 1,100 local children went to Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, while most of the independent schools left the town, some never to return. The departure of non-essential civilians left many empty properties, and over five years the rate revenue of the borough was supported by government grants amounting to £315,000.

The Report Centre from which the Civil Defence Services were controlled moved from the Town Hall after it had suffered bomb damage to Garth Place (now St. Francis' School) where the Town Council also met until the end of the war. The work of the Town Clerk (Mr. Edward Smith) as Sub-Controller of the borough's Civil Defence under the East Sussex organisation was acknowledged in 1946 by the presentation to him of an illuminated address on behalf of the townspeople. The civic lead in the town's war effort had from the first been outstanding under the influence of the Mayor (Alderman W. N. Cuthbert) who served from 1936–42. Mr. Smith also played a leading part in the formation of the Borough Development Committee which produced a comprehensive plan for post-war Bexhill, the effect of which was largely lost when planning responsibilities were transferred to the East Sussex County Council after the war. The borough civil defence organisation did not cease to exist until the East Sussex stand-down in 1968.

A notable contribution to the war effort was that of the Bexhill Centre of the Women's Voluntary Service (now prefixed by the title 'Royal'). Formed in March 1939 the members assisted with billeting evacuees, the large-scale evacuation of the town, and welfare work for the thousands of troops stationed in the borough until the invasion of Normandy. Among these were Canadian and Free French units, and nothing reflected more credit on Bexhill than the way in which they were all welcomed and so much done for their welfare and entertainment, a voluntary effort in which immense work was done by the Rotary Club, although itself depleted in numbers.

The two Red Cross detachments which had managed hospitals in the first world war again expanded rapidly and undertook nursing work among evacuees, especially at the maternity hospital which occupied the convalescent home at Cooden. Later a supply depot provided comforts and many essential articles on a vast scale. The unity and exemplary work of those who remained in Bexhill during the worst years of the war gave the town its own 'finest hour' and when V.E. Day came the news was received with a deep sense of thankfulness, one of the first acts being a united service in Egerton Park. Later street teas for children and welcome home parties for returning Servicemen were organised, but the final act of World War II for the town was the unveiling of plaques on the memorials commemorating those who had given their lives on active service.

Many years later a facet of the war which had been quite unknown to the public was disclosed with some details of a resistance organisation formed against a possible German invasion in 1940, and it must be remembered that the town was within the coastal area of the Nazis' Operation 'Sea-Lion'. There were 21 patrols in Sussex operating from 28 hideouts, and one of the local volunteers was a future mayor of the borough, Mr. E. T. Johnson.

RAF WARTLING

Although not part of the town's civilian war effort, there remains in local history an honoured place for the former Royal Air Force Station called after the nearby village of Wartling, but which lies within the borough boundary. This area, originally farmland, was acquired by the Air Ministry before the war and a ground control interception unit functioned there between 1941 and 1944, taking an active part in the destruction of 59 enemy aircraft and the possible destruction of another 14. During June 1944 the unit was responsible for destroying 244 flying bombs. After the war the station was maintained as a peacetime establishment, and became a transit camp until relinquished in 1964, when an illustrated board recording the wartime achievements was handed to the Town Council for safe keeping. The first inscription on this historic record includes the name of the future Squadron Leader Guy Gibson of 'Dam Buster' fame. In 1967 the area was adapted by the Home Office as a category 'C' prison after a public inquiry at which considerable opposition to the scheme had been forthcoming. Time happily proved the fears of many residents to have been ill-founded and the work of Northeye Prison, as it was named after the ancient township which once existed in the locality, became accepted in the town's social service, largely due to the personality and work of the first governor, Mr. D. A. Ward.

Volunteers and Territorial Army

For some 80 years until the formation of the Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve in 1967 Bexhill maintained direct links first with the Volunteer movement and then the Territorial Army of which four branches were once represented in the town.

Pride of place was claimed by the Royal Artillery, for in 1886 60 men enrolled at the Queen's Head public house in Belle Hill to form a battery of the 1st Cinque Ports Volunteer Artillery whose headquarters were at Dover. For them the proprietor of that old-established hostelry, Mr. Goodwin, built a drill hall between his premises and London Road, and which still stands though long adapted to other uses. With guns placed where the Colonnade is now, the battery engaged in firing practice along the western shore and in 1896 won 19 cups at a military tournament in London. On the formation of the Territorial Army in 1908 the unit became the 6th Battalion the 2nd (Home Counties) Brigade, R.F.A., and as such provided the gun carriage drawn by six horses for the funeral procession through Bexhill of the Maharajah of Cooch Behar who died in the town in 1911. During the first world war the battery was in India and Mesopotamia, and after various changes 'in between the wars' served from 1949–45 as part of the 44th (Home Counties) divisional artillery in Flanders, North Africa, and then, after conversion to a medium regiment, in North-West Europe from D-Day + 1. After the Territorial Army reforms of 1947 it became a light anti-aircraft unit until dis-

banded in the re-organisation of 1967 which marked the end of the old Territorial Army.

The infantry was represented in the town from 1904 when a half-company was formed of the 1st Battalion (Cinque Ports) Volunteers, a force raised and commanded by William Pitt as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports in Napoleonic times. When the Territorial Army was formed the battalion became the 5th (Cinque Ports) Battalion The Royal Sussex Regiment, and its Bexhill members formed part of Ore and Battle companies. In the first world war it fought with distinction in France and the Battle of Aubers Ridge, in which Major G. L. Courthope, Member of Parliament for the Rye Division, was wounded, was long remembered. The battalion, which later saw action in Italy in the Allies' advance to the Austrian frontier, was long commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel F. G. Langham who was awarded the C.M.G. in 1915, and who became the first Clerk to the magistrates at Bexhill when the local Bench was formed in 1928. He was the son of Mr. F. A. Langham who had been Clerk to the Local Board and Urban Council. In the second world war the battalion served in France, North Africa, Persia and Italy. From changes of the post-war period a platoon survived at Bexhill until 1966 when The Royal Sussex Regiment became the 3rd Battalion The Queen's Regiment, so that now only the 14th (Sussex) Independent Cadet Platoon remains at Bexhill, sharing a drill hall with No. 2262 Air Training Corps Squadron.

The town's link with the Corps of Royal Engineers originated through a fortress company raised at Eastbourne in 1890; when a fourth company was formed six years later its headquarters were at Bexhill. The practical work of the unit, including bridge building, attracted much attention and one model by the local Volunteers was later used in the Corps Engineering School at Chatham. A number of the men volunteered for service in the South African War. In the Territorial Army the company became the 2nd Home Counties Field Company and went to France in 1914 where, under the command of Major A. C. Ticehurst (who commanded the Bexhill battalion of the Sussex Home Guard in the second world war), it helped to blow up Hill 60 in the Ypres Salient. After the first world war the company formed part of a defence force during a national coal strike. In the second world war, after evacuation from Dunkirk, it served in India and Burma. Following several reorganisations in subsequent years Sussex units of the Corps ceased to exist in 1967.

First raised in 1794 but disbanded after the Napoleonic wars, the Sussex Yeomanry was re-formed in 1901 during the South African War, Bexhill having a troop in an East Sussex squadron commanded by Major Freeman-Thomas, Member of Parliament for Hastings and a brother-in-law of the 8th Earl De La Warr. The troop provided the bearer party at the Bexhill funeral procession of the Maharajah of Cooch Behar. In the first world war it served at Gallipoli, then in the Western Desert, and finally in the Palestine campaign which resulted in

the capture of Jerusalem. Re-formed afterwards as a Royal Artillery regiment, it pioneered this Territorial Army re-organisation and in the 1939–45 war fought in the Abyssinian campaign before going to Egypt and Iraq, and lastly saw active service in Italy. After various post-war changes it ceased to be a separate unit in 1955.

The expansion of the Volunteer movement at the turn of the century, due to the South African War, led to a new drill hall being erected for the Artillery. Opened by Lord Brassey in 1901, it was the largest hall in the town at the time. It was bought by the Post Office in 1967. A hall for the other local Territorial Army units was built on its western side, near the junction of the Little Common and Down Roads, in 1915.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Leisure and Culture

BEXHILL'S SEA FRONT parades were not only an amenity but a necessity, growing out of the sea walls which embanked the low ground behind. The East Parade, built by Mr. John Webb for the De La Warr estate in 1883, marked the beginning of the new town and future resort. Three years later, as part of his development of the Egerton Park estate, Mr. Webb entered into an agreement with the 7th Earl De La Warr to build a western promenade and adjoining roads which stood out like causeways above the marshy ground that is now Egerton Park and Polegrove. Between these two embankments was The Horn, a low promontory on which stood the coastguard station, demolished in 1934 to make way for the De La Warr Pavilion.

The first part of the sea front to be acquired by the local authority, then the Urban Council, was the stretch of Marina between Sackville Road and Sea Road in 1895. The same year the Council refused terms on which the De La Warr estate offered the East and De La Warr Parades and thereafter, until these were taken over by the Corporation in 1913, ornamental gates shut them off from the rest of the sea front. This distinctive entrance was demolished as soon as the Town Council obtained control. Access to De La Warr estate land at the junctions of Sea Road with Cantelupe Road and Buckhurst Road was early restricted by wooden gates. In the last years of the old century the Urban Council failed to take advantage of Earl De La Warr's offer of what was known as the 'Triangular Plot' and the Marina Court block of flats was built on the site by private enterprise, though the entire project was not completed. The property was acquired by the Corporation and demolished in 1970 to extend the De La Warr Pavilion car park. In 1896 the construction of a cycle track, bicycling then reaching the height of its popularity, added to the amenities of the East Parade which was at that time the fashionable promenade of Bexhill. In 1902 the first motor races in England took place along this stretch.

The West promenade and Egerton Park were taken over from Mr. Webb by the Urban Council in 1901. The parade was extended to its present length, but

both this work and the original promenade were so severely damaged in the storms of 1910 that they had to be re-built with a stronger sea wall. Two years earlier the danger of undermining by the sea had been increased after large falls from South Cliff.

The turn of the century also saw the private construction of Marina Arcade, the centre of which was designed for a swimming bath but never completed as such. One of the promoters then built the Granville Hotel.

In 1909 the Corporation began the Central Parade, virtually linking the eastern and western sections, and with this were laid out gardens including the 'religious lawn', so called because it became a popular summer meeting place for Sunday School and other religious services. The Central Parade was opened in 1910 and was followed by the building of the Colonnade for which the architect was Mr. J. B. Wall who designed many handsome buildings in the town and was a mayor of the borough during the first world war. The Colonnade was opened on Coronation Day 1911 by the 1st Earl Brassey who had been mayor four years earlier. Excavations for the Colonnade unearthed foundations of the Martello Tower demolished in 1870. The adjoining land was owned by the War Department, while that of the adjacent coastguard station had come under Admiralty control and later that of the Board of Trade. Negotiations by the Corporation to acquire these sites extended over many years, but eventually allowed the building of the De La Warr Pavilion in 1934–35. Another site of long controversy was that of the Kursaal which, erected in 1896, stood where the Sailing Club is now. It was not purchased by the town until 1935 and then for a figure almost six times that which had been rejected in 1913.

The foreshore between high and low watermark was acquired by the Corporation from the Board of Trade and Commissioners of Crown Lands in 1934 and is on trust 'for the common use, benefit and enjoyment of the public', subject to by-laws.

Bexhill has never had a pier, but there were several proposals to build one, the first, in 1887, opposite the present site of the Clock Tower which is the town's memorial to King Edward VII. In 1898 a local company was formed with the intention of building a pier, again from the West Promenade, and including a pavilion to seat 1,500 people. After opposing this, the Urban Council put forward its own scheme which was supported by the Town Association, an independent body representing business and social interests. The plan was rejected by the Local Government Board after an inquiry at which it had been opposed by the De La Warr estate. The Council and the Earl then considered building a pier as an extension of the Kursaal, on the lines of the original project for that structure. Discussions with the Board of Trade led to the formation of a Bexhill Central Pier Company which obtained an Act of Parliament in 1901 to build a pier between the Kursaal and the coastguard station. The powers conferred by the Act were

never exercised, and the prospective approach roads, Pier View East and Pier View West, are now named Channel View East and West. In 1907 the Corporation proposed a thousand-foot long pier with a circular promenade and bandstand, the approach to which would have been an extension of Devonshire Road on the south side of Marina. This made no further progress and in 1910 the approach was partially blocked by the erection of the New Club, now the Bexhill Club.

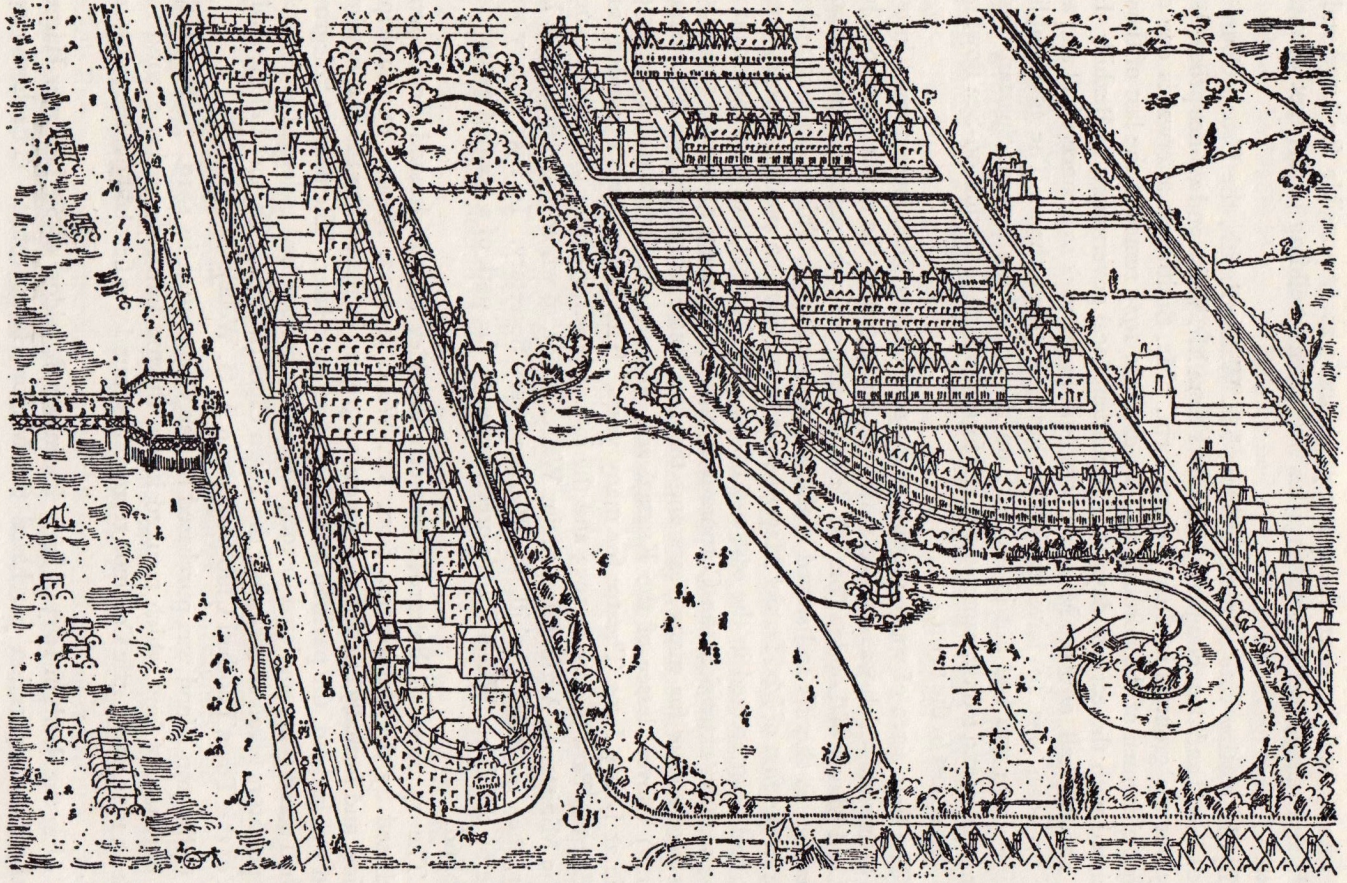
Another proposal which never materialised was for a sea front promenade linking Bexhill with St. Leonards. This was first put forward in 1892, revived some 30 years later and again mentioned when the closure of Glyne Gap gas-works in 1969 offered the prospect of an improvement to that part of the shore.

The earliest plans for the new town of Bexhill in the 1880s provided for parks and other open spaces which exist to this day. The most important was Egerton Park, of which the eastern end, adjoining Park Road, was begun by Mr. John Webb who was developing the Egerton Park estate. This work included the construction of the park lake by the drainage and diversion of rivulets, and during it an iguanadon vertebra and an ancient boat were found. In 1888 Mr. Webb laid out the first tennis courts and the next year made a primitive swimming bath, lining an old salting depression with concrete and bringing sea water through an iron pipe.

In the design for the De La Warr estate east of Sea Road, ornamental grounds were envisaged where St. Richard's school playing fields now are in the angle of Ashdown and Dorset Roads, but they were never completed. The site, which had been a brickfield and sheep-washing pond, was eventually given by the 8th Earl De La Warr as a cricket field after his private ground had been cut up to make Magdalen and Manor Roads. The St. Barnabas' and Bexhill-on-Sea clubs played there and later, until the second world war, it became the home of the Bexhill and Sutherland tennis clubs where inter-county and open tournaments were staged.

Gardens were early laid out between the present Brassey and Middlesex Roads, but in 1899 became the home of the Cantelupe Croquet Club, and the game, for which Bexhill was noted, was played there until the second world war. The ground is now owned by Gullivers Bowling Club which has indoor and outdoor rinks.

In the early 1890s the Local Board (succeeded by the Urban Council in 1895), applied under the Commons Act of 1876 for the management of the 44 acres of the Down to be vested in the local authority 'to prevent nuisances and preserve the area to the best use of the inhabitants of Bexhill', but not to interfere with the pasturage rights of commoners. The application, which was assented to by the Lord of the Manor, who retains ground rights to this day, was approved by a Select Committee of the House of Commons and the transference of control was effected in 1897. There followed the laying out of the Down with the ridings which remain today, one of the first works of the Council's Surveyor, Mr. George



XIII.—The first of several unsuccessful pier schemes at Bexhill was that in 1887 as part of the Egerton Park and West Parade development, shown in this illustration from the 'Bexhill Chronicle' of that year.

Ball, who served the town for many years and was responsible for large-scale parade and many road undertakings, as well as the building of the first council houses.

By the casting vote of the chairman, Mr. Walter Smith, the Urban Council in 1901 leased and then bought Egerton Park from Mr. Webb and at once proceeded to lay out the grounds in their present form. Mr. Smith was afterwards one of the first aldermen of the borough and his death in 1925 removed the last of those associated with the earliest days of independent local government in Bexhill. In 1903 a shelter hall, now the Museum, was built in the park as a concert hall and an early proposal was to have an indoor bowling green there. The first public bowling green was laid out in the park on the site of the present Spartan Club green in 1907 and led the same year to the formation of the Bexhill-on-Sea Bowling Club, the oldest in the town.

The four acres of waste ground as far as Brockley Road were turned into a park extension which was opened with great ceremony in the summer of 1906 by the Lord Mayor of London (Sir W. Vaughan Morgan) who came in state accompanied by his sheriffs and stayed at the Metropole Hotel. This was a memorable event in the first of Mr. Daniel Mayer's four mayoralties. A modest concert party stage had been erected in the east end of the park in 1905, but with the opening of the western extension the Corporation built the Pergola, a popular entertainment rendezvous for many years and the first lessee of which was Mr. James (Jimmy) Glover, lessee of the Kursaal and who was the celebrated director of music at Drury Lane Theatre for many years. The Pergola was expanded into the Egerton Park theatre in 1933 and the indoor bowling centre there was opened by the Minister of Agriculture, Major Walter Elliot, to whom the 9th Earl De La Warr, then mayor of Bexhill, was Parliamentary Secretary. In 1951 history was made by the Inner Wheel Club's presentation in the park of a scented garden for the blind.

The 13 acres of Polegrove between Brockley and Richmond Roads were purchased by the Corporation from Mr. Webb in 1912, levelled by municipal tipping, and formally opened as a recreation ground in 1923 when the first bowling green was laid out, the pavilion being built two years later. The present Polegrove football stand was completed in 1929 after an earlier one had collapsed at a match, the spectators involved including the Town Clerk (Mr. S. J. Taylor) and the chairman of the Town Football Club (Alderman A. G. Wells).

Collington Wood was purchased by the Corporation in 1919. At Sidley the first purchase of land which resulted in the Buxton Drive recreation ground was made in 1925, and Little Common recreation ground was first laid out the following year.

After the death in 1963 of Lady Harmsworth, widow of Sir Leicester Harmsworth, the Corporation purchased the Manor House estate. The house was

demolished except for a few ancient portions which were incorporated into newly laid out ornamental gardens. With the preservation of the Barn and other outbuildings the Manor House gardens formed an important addition to the borough's amenities and provided a reminder of the Victorian age and the distinctive place which the old house had held in the life of the growing town.

Museum

In the autumn of 1912 a small committee met to form a museum at Bexhill. Funds were raised, the Corporation granted the use of the shelter hall in Egerton Park, built in 1903, and the museum was opened there in 1914, chiefly by the efforts of the Rev. J. C. Thompson who had retired to the town from a pastorate at Heathfield. He lived to the age of 92 and died during the second world war. The Museum Association was formed in 1923 and the property vested in trustees for the permanent benefit of the borough. In 1920 there was appointed, first as Assistant Curator and then as Curator, Mr. H. J. Sargent who was to serve the town for more than 50 years, becoming also Borough Meteorologist in 1923. The Museum became Mr. Sargent's life-work, and to the extensive Natural History display there has been added a comprehensive section on local history. In recent years grants from the Carnegie Trust and increased assistance from the Corporation have enabled the Museum to be further improved, while special exhibitions have brought its work to greater public notice and appreciation.

Presentations to Mr. Sargent on his golden jubilee as Curator in 1970 marked the town's gratitude for his remarkable and almost unaided work. As Borough Meteorologist his daily readings have provided an uninterrupted sequence since 1923, before which local weather records had first been taken by Miss Ann Scrivens, of the well-known Bexhill family of that name, and then by Mr. G. Brisley, a local chemist, who, when he died in 1937, was the last survivor of the Local Board formed in 1884.

Library

The public library service in Bexhill has a chequered history. The town declined a Carnegie library through unwillingness to levy a small library rate, and depended for many years on the fiction libraries of stationers and booksellers, together with reading rooms, one of the first of which was opened in 1895 and another at the Kursaal the next year. The first attempt at a public library was made about 1912 when some 25 books were available in the porch of St. Mary Magdalen's Roman Catholic church. In 1918 this small library moved to new premises in Endwell Road where it included a Roman Catholic lending section on a postal service basis. It was managed by Mr. W. Reed-Lewis, with voluntary help, and

when he left the town in 1920 he received a letter of commendation for his work from Pope Benedict XV.

With his departure the library closed and some of the books were stored at the Town Hall until a small library was opened at Marina Arcade in 1924 under the care of the Rev. W. R. Bird who had been minister at the Springfield Road (Primitive) Methodist Church. Three years later the Town Council elected a small Library sub-committee. When the De La Warr Pavilion was opened the library of some 3,000 books, which Mr. Bird classified and arranged single-handed, was moved to the East Wing (now the Elizabeth Room) there, and for the first time the Town Council made modest provision for the purchase of additional volumes.

After the second world war, during which the town was without a public library service, responsibility was transferred by agreement to the East Sussex County Council which bought the former St. Barnabas' school building in Western Road and opened it as a branch of the County Library in 1951. It was extended and modernised in 1966 and sub-branches flourish at Sidley and Little Common community centres. The library developed as one of Bexhill's most patronised and highly regarded institutions, largely through the efficient direction for more than 20 years of Miss Marjorie Butler who was appointed branch librarian at its opening.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Entertainment

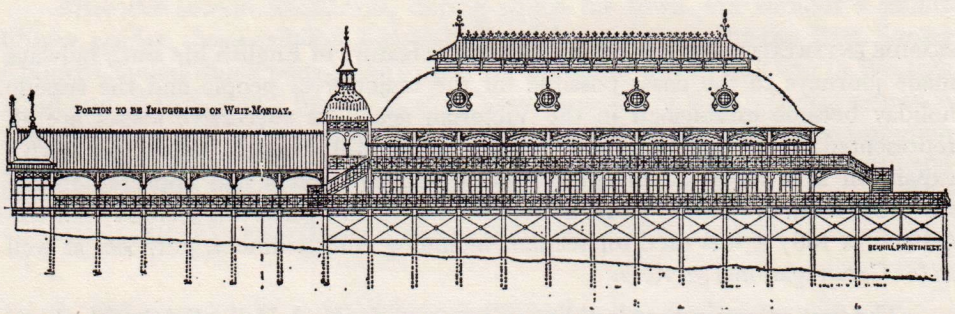
SEASIDE ENTERTAINMENT HAS been a distinctive feature of English life since railways made journeys to the coast possible for the majority of people and the seaside holiday became established in the Victorian age. Its successive stages are all represented in the entertainment records of Bexhill, though before the town's expansion as a resort small companies of touring players had appeared in the assembly room of the Bell Hotel in the Old Town, and when the Victoria Hall was opened in 1887 it was used for secular, including entertainment, purposes as well as for Congregational services.

The first entertainment building proper was the York Hall adjoining the hotel of that name in London Road and which was opened in 1895 by the hotel's builder and first proprietor, Mr. J. P. Goodwin. He was prominent in local affairs for a number of years, a member of the Urban Council, and built the Pelham Hotel at Sidley. His father owned the 'Queen's Head', the old-established hostelry in Belle Hill. The York Hall, later the Gaiety cinema, is now part of commercial premises. Concert and theatrical performances were given there, the first organised by Mr. Daniel Mayer, and in subsequent years both the Carl Rosa Opera company and the Ben Greet Players appeared.

One early scheme which did not see fruition was for a variety theatre at the corner of Sackville Road and Marina, but with the growth of the town south of the railway, and particularly the opening of the Sackville Hotel in 1890, demand for seaside entertainment led to Viscount Cantelupe engaging the White Viennese Band of Herr Stanislaus Wurm in 1894 to give concerts on the De La Warr Parade. So successful was this first 'summer season' in the town's history that Wurm was given a contract until the end of the century. Wurm, who came from the then Austrian province of Galicia, had a long musical career in England and appeared at Bexhill as late as 1912; for a time he was part-owner of a small club on the sea-front.

The rapid development of the resort resulted in the 8th Earl De La Warr

(as Viscount Cantelupe became in 1896) building the Kursaal, a pier-like structure and pavilion which jutted seawards from the De La Warr parade where the Sailing Club now stands. The Kursaal was opened with great ceremony on Whit-Monday 1896 by the popular Duchess of Teck, mother of the future Queen Mary, who with her husband was the guest of the Earl at the Manor House. Sea-front entertainment was concentrated there because the parade formed part of the De La Warr estate, and from 1895, until they were demolished in 1913 when the East and De La Warr parades were acquired by the Corporation, it could be shut to vehicular traffic by ornamental gates near the bottom of Sea Road. For some years the Kursaal remained the town's principal seat of entertainment and many famous artistes appeared there. When Wurm's contract expired the Kursaal was leased to



XIV.—The plan for the Kursaal, of which only the left-hand portion, opened in 1896, was completed.

Mr. James (Jimmy) Glover, famous for many years as musical director of Drury Lane theatre, and who became a substantial figure—not only physically—in the life of Bexhill. Mayor in 1906–7, he was honoured with a dinner at the former Hotel Cecil in London (where Shell Mex House now stands). A great publicist with many friends in London newspaper circles, he did much to promote the interests of Bexhill in influential quarters. In some eight years at the Kursaal Glover arranged two thousand concerts, and when the Egerton Park extension was opened in 1906 and the Pergola, forerunner of the Park theatre, built, he became the lessee there also. A plan to extend the Kursaal never materialised, and in 1908 it was sold by Earl De La Warr and thereafter gradually declined. Renamed the Pavilion during the first world war because of objection to the German title, it was eventually bought by the Corporation and demolished in 1936, but in its last years was notable for the first repertory performances given in the town, those of Philip Yorke and a talented company of young players.

The Manor House itself was the scene of many outdoor entertainments in the last decade of the Victorian era and the Edwardian age; the gardens illuminated with fairy lights made an enchanting setting for concert and theatrical performances

which were long remembered as emblematic of the 'good old days'.

The concert party, that time-honoured entertainment of the seaside, made its appearance at Bexhill in 1900 when the Olympia Quartet gave performances near the Metropole Hotel. Demolished in 1955 (it had been bombed and burnt during the second world war) the hotel stood where the putting green now is west of the De La Warr Pavilion whose site was then coastguard station land owned by the Crown. In Egerton Park a popular concert party several years later was Cardow's Cadets, followed by Pat Kinsella and Harry Collard, who also opened Bexhill's first cinema. When their Park contract was not renewed they started the Coronets party which performed at The Lawn, a patch of ground now part of the Marina car park on the east side of the De La Warr Pavilion. The centre of the Park shows was a stage where the Spartan bowling club green now is, while in 1903 a shelter hall was built for indoor performances, Jack Hulbert being among the artistes who appeared there. The hall is now the Museum.

The extension of the Park in 1906 to its present western limit at Brockley Road was conveniently followed by a Public Health Act which allowed a penny rate for entertainment, representing some £400 in Bexhill at that time, and as a result the Corporation built the Pergola, a semi-covered open-air theatre which was very popular until supplanted by the Park theatre and indoor bowling centre (now only the latter) in 1933. In the early years of the century public entertainment in the town was arranged by an Entertainments Association on which the Corporation was represented. A company was also formed to promote a winter garden scheme for the western end of the Park, but this came to nothing. For many years the Poppies concert party of Will Tissington and Katharine Craig gave immense pleasure to thousands of townsfolk and visitors alike, but its appeal declined with the more sophisticated tastes of the later 1930s and it ended with the advent of the second world war.

Two pre–1914 ventures remain to be noted. A skating rink was opened in 1910 in Buckhurst Road but failed to prosper and the building, variously used for some years, was eventually demolished to make way in 1937 for the Ritz cinema, where the automatic telephone exchange now stands. The other was the Colonnade, built by the Town Council (which had completed the Central parade in 1910), and opened by Lord Brassey on Coronation day the following year. This was a popular centre for military band and orchestral concerts until the De La Warr Pavilion was opened nearly a quarter of a century later. For a number of years Bor and Paikin's orchestra was popular and the former retained his association with the town for many years. The amount of pre-1914 entertainment in Bexhill was remarkable: Stage performances at the Kursaal, concerts there and at the Colonnade, various entertainments in the Manor House grounds, and concert parties in Egerton Park and at The Lawn, besides the first cinemas, the Bijou opened by Kinsella and Collard, and the De Luxe in Western Road.

De La Warr Pavilion

The Colonnade had been intended as the first part of a larger entertainments centre and after the war the project of a central hall was revived, a number of schemes being put forward, notably during the mayoralties of Councillor A. Turner Laing in 1928–30. The land between Marina and the Central parade, owned by the Crown as part of the coastguard station which had ceased to function by the end of the decade, was gradually bought by the Corporation, and when the 9th Earl De La Warr became mayor in 1932 his advocacy induced the Town Council to approve the principle of a major entertainments hall. An open competition was promoted in which 230 designs were submitted. This resulted in that of two German architects, Erich Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff, who had recently come to this country and later went to the United States, being accepted in 1934, and the present De La Warr Pavilion was completed the following year at a cost of £80,000 largely on the site of the old coastguard station. It was a building 'before its time', the concept of Central European architects of advanced architectural ideas 'for whom the British seaside, with its particular requirements for recreation and corrosive air must have been a completely unexplored field', to quote an official report on the building. Nevertheless, in spite of the original design not being wholly implemented, it has remained an outstanding example of continental influence in the 1930s, has been placed on the list of buildings of architectural or historic interest, and is under the aegis of the Fine Arts Commission.

A memorial plaque at the foot of the spiral staircase was laid by Earl De La Warr on the day of King George V's silver jubilee in 1935. The previous March the King and Queen Mary had paid an unofficial visit to the Pavilion, then in course of erection, during a visit from Eastbourne to Cooden Beach Hotel where they were the guests of Lord and Lady De La Warr. His Lordship, a former Lord-in-Waiting to His Majesty, was then in the last of his three terms as mayor of Bexhill. The Pavilion was opened in December 1935 by the Duke of York, who a year later succeeded to the throne as King George VI. He was accompanied to Bexhill by the Duchess, now the Queen Mother.

Among the early performances at the Pavilion were a recital by Fritz Kreisler and the premiere of Bernard Shaw's 'The Millionairess' by the company of Matthew Forsyth who was the borough's first Director of Entertainments, and which was attended by the author. After temporary closure at the beginning of the second world war the Pavilion, like the nation, experienced its finest hour. It thereafter remained open, despite some bomb damage to the stage end early in the war, and largely with the help of the town's Rotary Club provided regular entertainment for the thousands of troops stationed in the locality until the Normandy invasion. An immense service, worthy of record in the annals of the borough, was

24.—Bexhill in 1886, a view from the present De La Warr Pavilion site looking eastwards, showing the houses south of the railway, with the Devonshire Hotel in the centre.

25.—Devonshire Square in the 1890s, showing the hotel and site of the present Head Post Office which was opened in 1931.

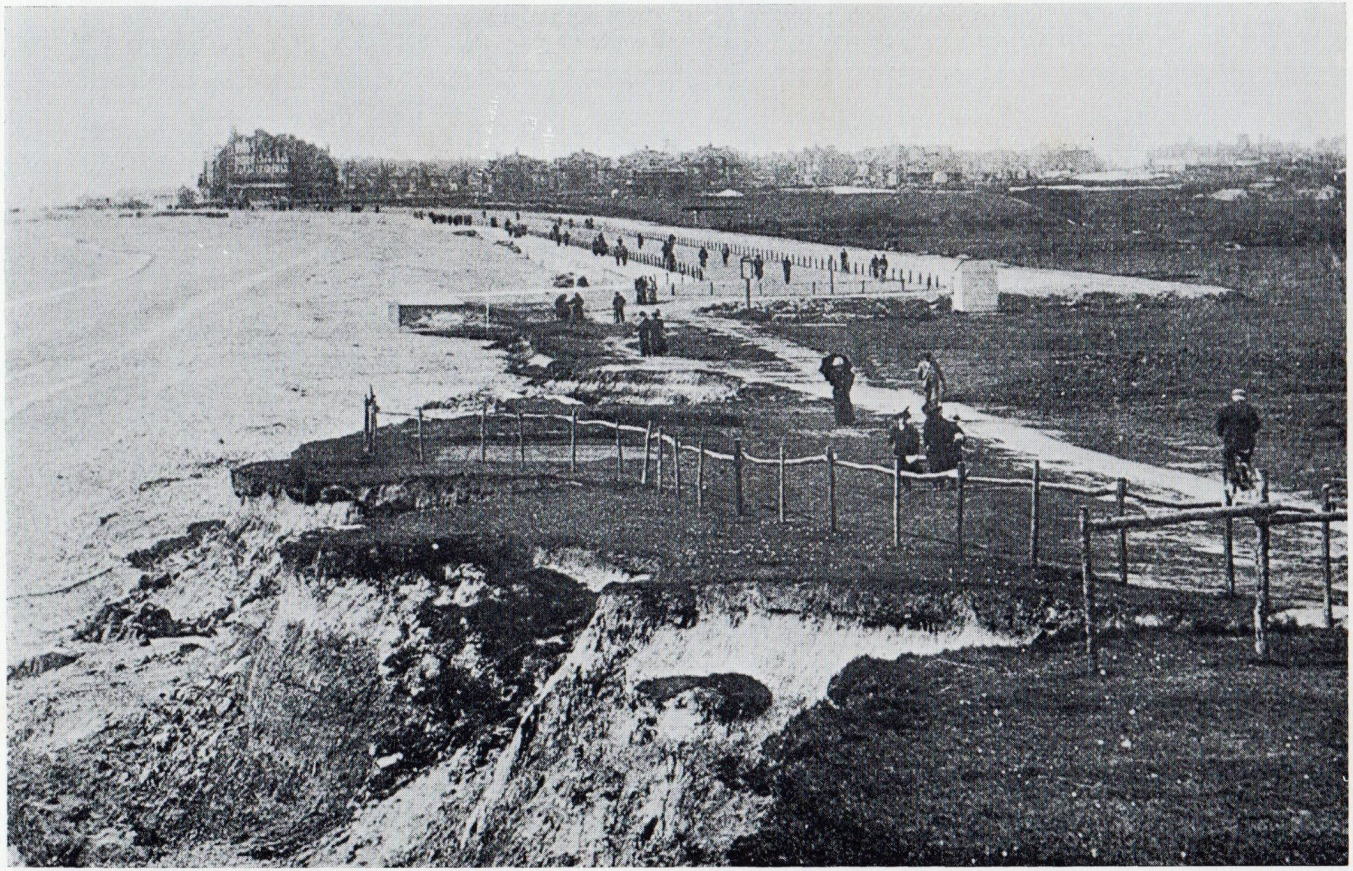
26.—The Knole Road croquet lawns of the Cantelupe (later Bexhill) club, now the home of Gullivers Bowling Club.

27.—The West Parade about 1900, looking from the site of the Colonnade, opened in 1911.

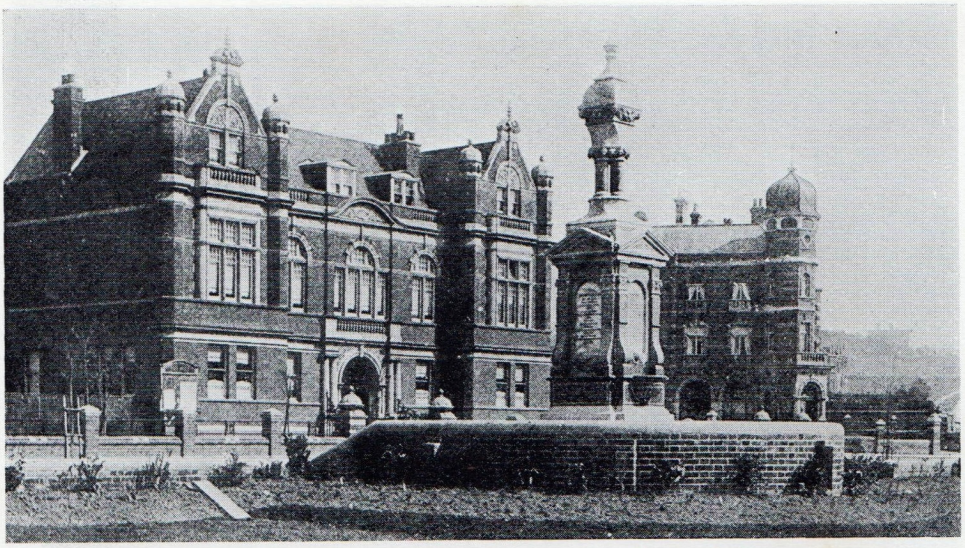
28.—An early picture of the Sackville Hotel, which was opened in 1890, standing in splendid isolation.

29.—An 1891 photograph of the Sea Road railway bridge looking towards Upper Sea Road and the Old Town convalescent home. The bridge was widened in 1905 for the tramway service.

30.—The Kursaal, built in 1896, and the ornamental entrance gates to the De La Warr Parade erected the previous year and which were demolished when the Corporation acquired the parade in 1913.

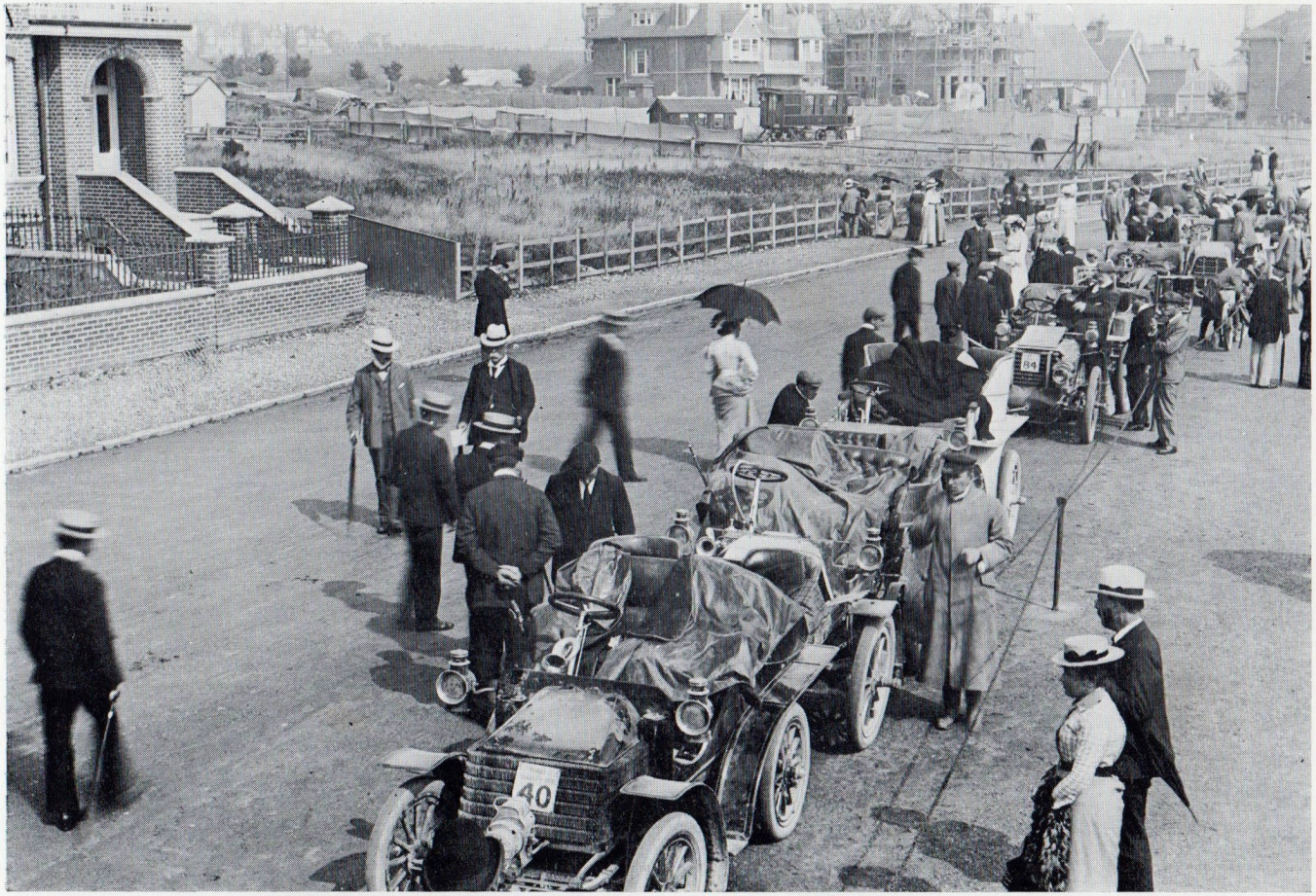


31.—A view from Galley Hill in 1896, showing the new cycling boulevard along the East Parade, with the Sackville Hotel in the background.

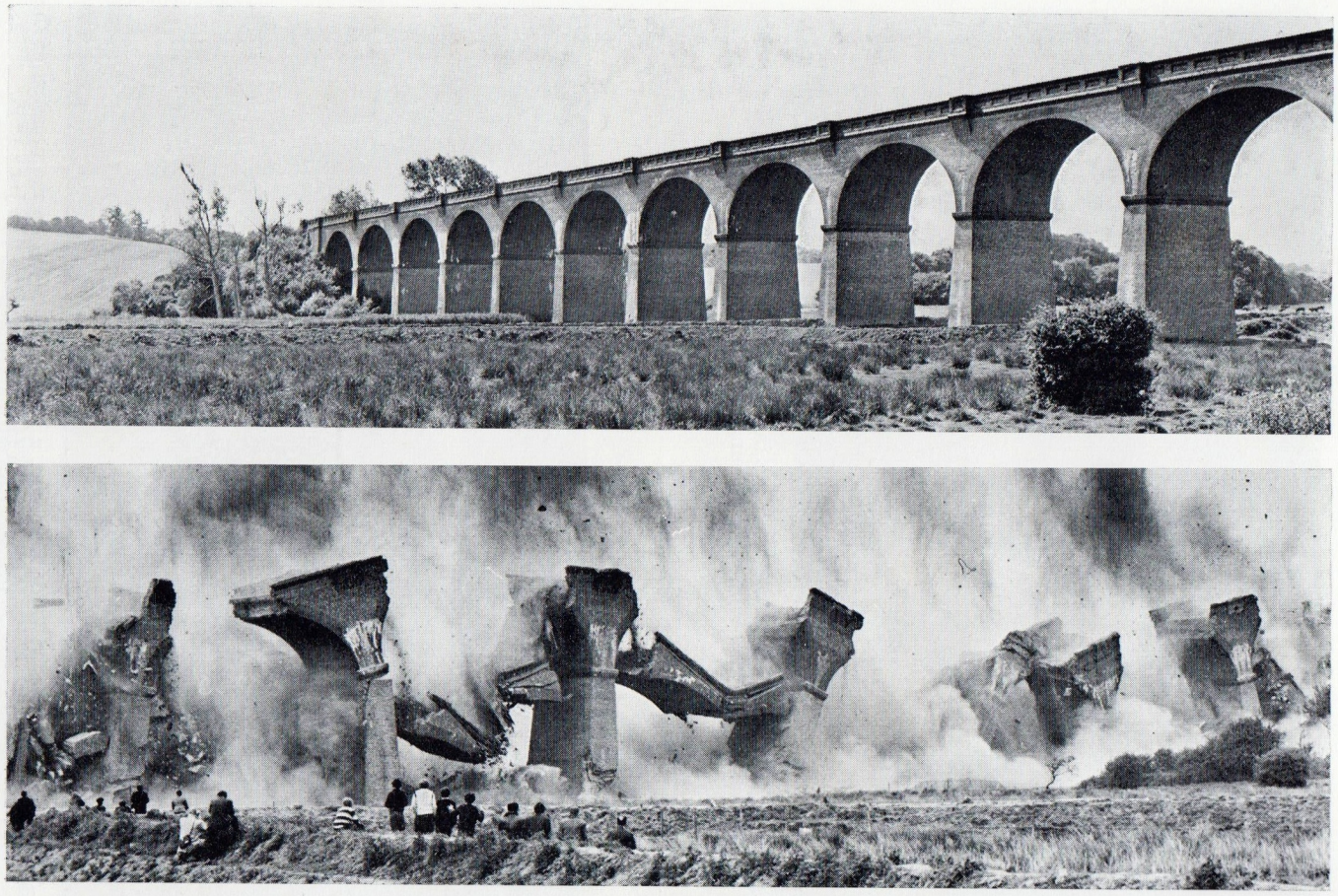


32.—The Town Hall, Lane memorial, and the present National Westminster Bank, a picture taken in 1898 when the memorial was unveiled and the bank built.

33.—St. Peter's Church before the extensive restoration of 1878, showing the dormer windows which were then removed along with other alterations.



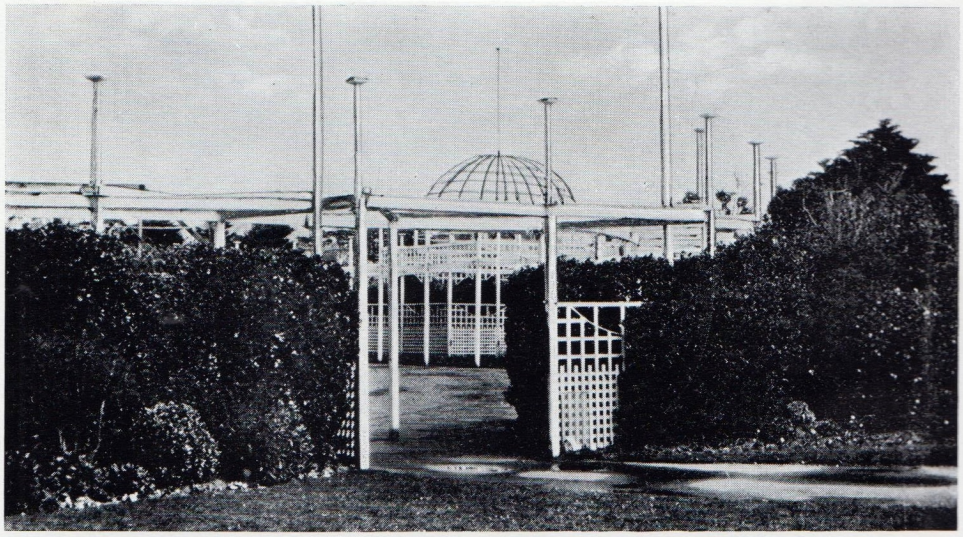
34.—The first motor races at Bexhill in 1902.



35.—The majestic viaduct which carried the Bexhill West to Crowhurst branch railway line over the Crowhurst marshes from 1902 until the line closed in 1964. The lower picture shows the remarkable scene at the demolition of the viaduct in May 1969.

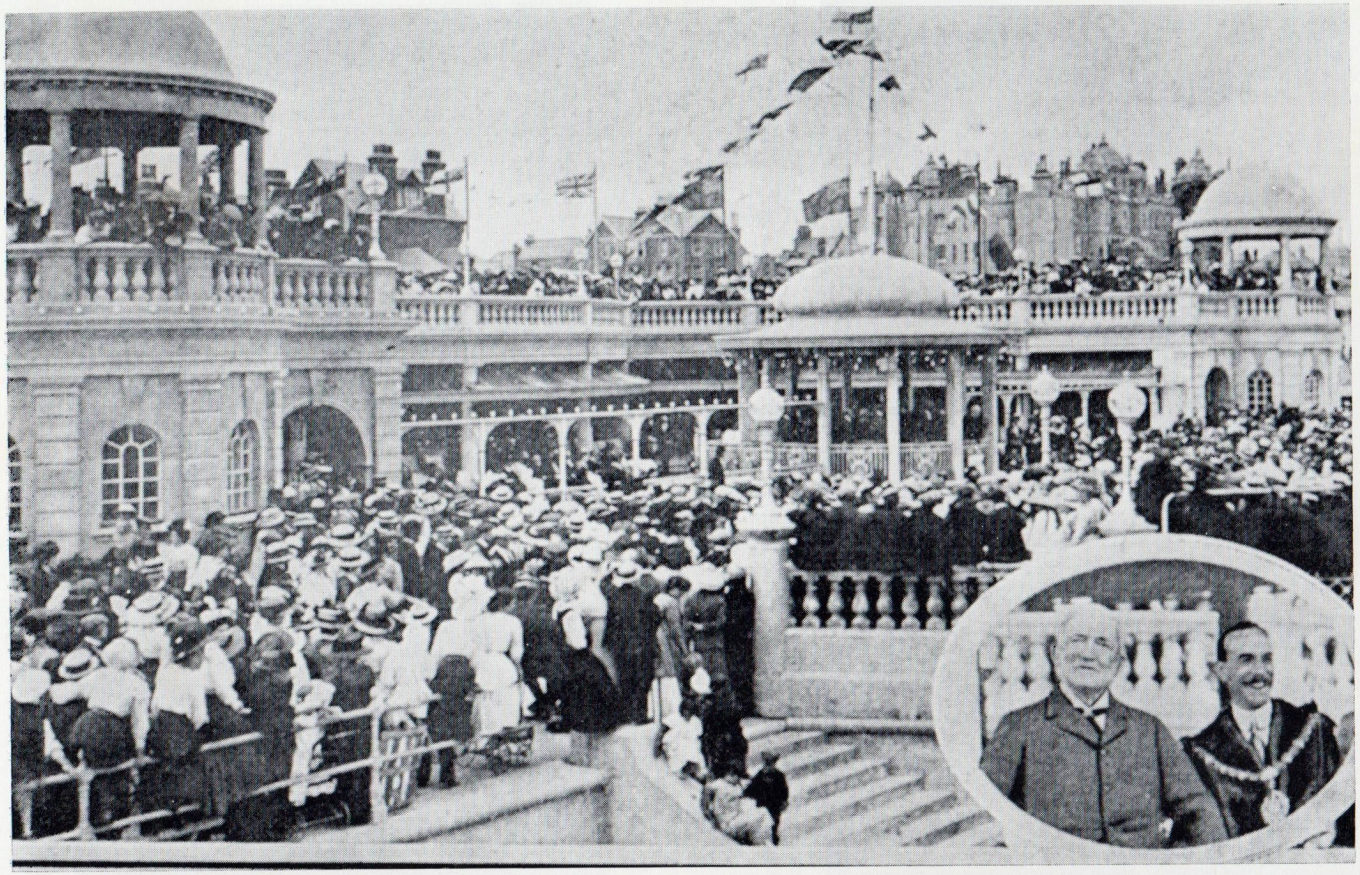
36.—A view of Old Town High Street as it was in the 1880s, one of a series of photographs taken by Dr. J. P. Wills, then a young practitioner in Bexhill.

37.—The Wheatsheaf Inn at Little Common, a photograph taken on the occasion of the annual outing of the Ninfield Mission Hall Sunday School in June 1898.



38.—The Pergola, the popular entertainment centre in Egerton Park which was built after the park extension of 1906, and made into the present Park Pavilion in 1933.

39.—Rough seas at the Colonnade, showing the structure's original ironwork balustrade and, on the left, part of the former Colonnade bandstand.

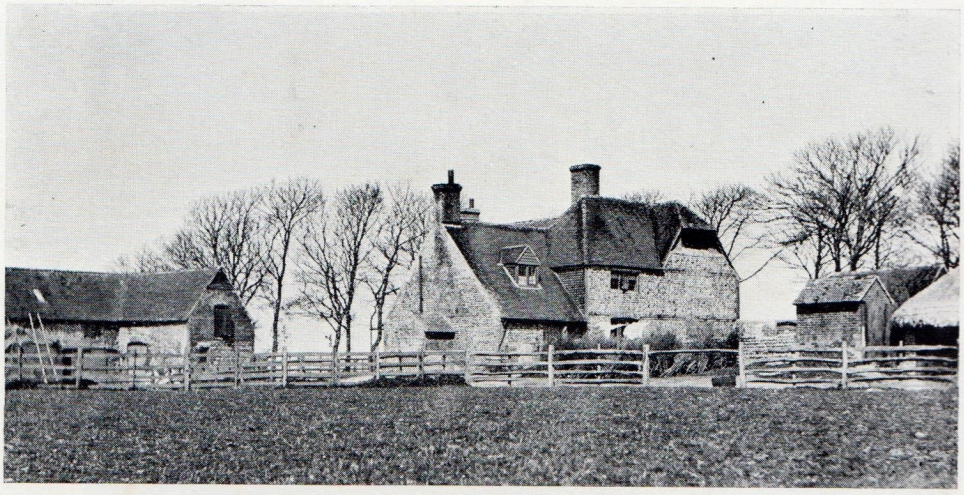


40.—A picture reproduced from the *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer* showing the opening of the Colonnade by the 1st Earl Brassey (inset with the then Mayor, Mr. J. A. Paton), on Coronation Day 1911. The now vanished bandstand was a popular entertainment centre for many years.

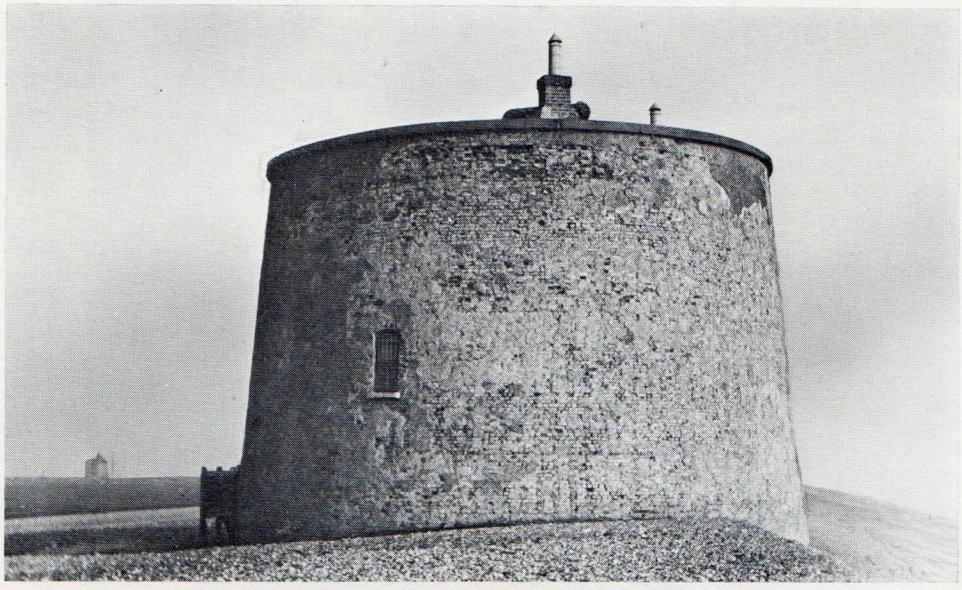
41.—The Pavilion (the former Kursaal) in its later days, with posters advertising Bexhill's first repertory company, Philip Yorke and his Players who came in the early 1930s.

42.—A West Parade scene before the first world war, showing the shelter, then a bandstand (a concert is in progress), which still stands.

43.—This distinctive cycle chalet stood at the De La Warr Parade end of the cycle track constructed along the East Parade by the 8th Earl De La Warr in 1896 when the cycling boom was at its peak.



44.—Lower Barnhorn farm as it was at the end of the last century, typical of the many farms which then flourished in Bexhill, Little Common and Sidley.



45.—Martello Tower No. 51 which stood at Cooden and was washed away by the sea at the end of the 19th century, the fate of most of the 12 towers which once stood along the Bexhill foreshore, and of which only the most westerly, No. 55 at Normans Bay, remains.

46.—The most memorable day in the history of the Borough of Bexhill: The visit of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh in October 1966. The Mayor (Councillor Mrs. M. E. Ackland) is presenting Councillor G. Woodfine to Her Majesty, and also shown are the Mayoress (Mrs. J. M. Silverton), and the Town Clerk (Mr. R. S. Robinson).

performed in sustaining both Service and civilian morale during the darkest years.

With the advent of peace, visits such as those of Richard Tauber and Sir Thomas Beecham and the London Philharmonic Orchestra attracted large audiences. From 1947 until 1960 there was a sequence of summer musical and comedy shows, while repertory played at the Pavilion in winter, and at Egerton Park in summer, until 1961 when the Penguin Players, who had come to the town in 1950, took over the major part of the De La Warr Pavilion programme throughout the year. The summer of 1960, the silver jubilee year of the Pavilion, saw the introduction of a successful series of music festivals, and for several years there were popular visits by the Hallé Orchestra, under its famous conductor-in-chief, Sir John Barbirolli, and then of the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Later the B.B.C. Concert Orchestra provided the basis of light music festivals in autumn. For some years, too, visits of famous pianists attracted large audiences.

Amateur Societies

Amateur theatrical and musical performances were staged in the town in the 1880s, though the first local musicians were the string players who accompanied the singing at St. Peter's Church before an organ was installed, an introduction to which they took exception. An orchestral and choral society was formed later, as well as a temperance string band, a reminder of the campaigns against the evils of drink in those days. Early in the present century a Musical Society staged 'Trial by Jury', in which Jimmy Glover played the Judge and prominent residents had walking-on parts. In between the world wars choral and musical societies were supported at Little Common and Sidley, and the formation of the Plainsong Society led to the Bexhill Chorus of which Vinen Stanley, also distinguished for his key role in university rugby circles, was the conductor. When he retired in 1951 the name was changed to the Choral Society which continues to enjoy deserved support for religious and secular performances.

On the stage, the Bexhill Players founded by Jack Fowler, a popular entertainer of young holiday visitors for many years as 'Uncle Jack', produced a wide range of musical and straight plays in between the world wars, but though much later merged with the Little Common Community Players had for some years really been succeeded by the Bexhill Light Opera and Dramatic Society founded in 1933 and which, as customary with all such societies, relied on the Gilbert and Sullivan operas for its repertoire. The Bexhill Amateur Theatrical Society started in 1935 and was the first amateur company to play at the De La Warr Pavilion where, also, the Shakespearean productions of Winceby House school were an annual event of the highest standard, with a memorable performance of Shaw's 'Saint Joan' for the silver jubilee year of the Pavilion, until the school closed in 1966.

Although southern England is not so renowned for brass bands as the Midlands and North, most towns did, and some still do, boast combinations of this kind. At Sidley a band grew from an orchestra formed in the late 1870s at the Working Men's Club. It headed the November the Fifth processions of the Sidley Bonfire Boys and paraded for the welcome given by the town to the 8th Earl De La Warr on his return from the South African War. Early in the present century the name was changed to that of the Bexhill Town Band. An orchestra formed in 1908 to accompany the singing at Sidley Brotherhood, a popular men's meeting started at the Primitive (now Springfield Road) Methodist Church, became the Springfield Brass Band which merged into the Town Band after the first world war. The Town Band itself ceased in the early 1950s. The present Bexhill British Legion Military Band was formed from the Territorial Army Artillery Band which had been based at Eastbourne but was disbanded under the reorganisations of the 1960s.

Cinemas

The first 'moving pictures' in the town were shown by the Velograph system at the Kursaal in 1898 and included scenes of Gladstone's funeral. Three years later there were bioscope views of the South African war. The first cinema proper was the Bijou, opened by Kinsella and Collard of local concert party fame, in Town Hall Square in 1910, the building now being the premises of a wholesale tobacco firm. The first film shown there was a local one of the opening of the Central parade. The Bijou was renamed St. George's cinema and as such enjoyed a successful period under the colourful proprietorship of John Ash, who was active in municipal affairs and a leading opponent of the Town Bill of 1921. The first 'talkies' between Brighton and Folkestone were shown at St. George's cinema in 1929, the film being 'The Broadway Melody'. The building closed as a cinema in 1954.

In Western Road, the De Luxe cinema, now incorporated in the printing works of F. J. Parsons Ltd., was opened in 1913 with a film of 'Scott's Last Expedition', and after the first world war the Playhouse, now the Classic, was built. The York Hall became the Gaiety cinema in 1935 and was the first in the town to advertise car parking accommodation. Bombed in 1940, it never re-opened, though the nearby bus stop unofficially preserves the name and mystifies newer residents. In 1937 the Ritz opened in Buckhurst Road on the site of the old skating rink, but was closed in 1961 and later demolished to make way for Bexhill's first automatic telephone exchange.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Sport

FOR A TOWN that has catered so much for those of advancing years, the contribution of sport to Bexhill is surprisingly important, and its various branches have done much to encourage the growth of the town. The 1890s, one of its most formative decades, saw the start of much organised sport, but the first world war ended the pack of the Bexhill Harriers which had existed for 130 years, and a number of the early football and cricket teams. In the second world war the once fashionable croquet and one of the town's three golf clubs were permanent casualties.

The Harriers, a pack of the now extinct Southern hound, existed from about 1785 until disbanded in 1915. It was founded and owned until 1891 by the Brook family, of whom Arthur Sawyer Brook succeeded his father as Master in 1853 and retired shortly before his death in 1890, on which occasion the family received the condolences of the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII) who had hunted with the pack in 1864. Thirty years earlier Princess (the future Queen) Victoria attended a meet at Bexhill and presented to Mr. Brook a silver hunting horn which he used ever afterwards. A description of him about the same time as the photograph of the Harriers (reproduced in Plate 21), conveyed a striking impression of his formidable figure . . . 'Master Brook, squire *de facto,* altho' not *de jure,* Master of Harriers (Brook's Harriers not unknown to fame), arch-Tory, and sometime king of Bexhill, is one of those men whom it does one good to look at. Standing above six feet high, but with shoulders a bit rounded from much riding, his thin grey locks showing below the broad brim of his brown hat, in his long green hunting coat, cords and tops, standing thus in his garden in the grey afternoon after a run with his harriers, I lately saw him with legs astride, hands deep in his breeches pockets, head thrown back and a delightfully genial smile illuminating his handsome face'.

On his death his son took over the Harriers but, more distinguished in the cricket field, disposed of the hounds to Viscount Cantelupe who built new kennels at Cooden to replace those in Old Town, his fiancée, the Hon. Muriel Brassey,

laying the foundation stone. The building survives but has been adapted to other uses.

After Lord Cantelupe, Mr. P. H. Trew, one of the greatest all-round sportsmen of the day, was Master for some years and another popular Master was Mr. C. Ward-Jackson who later became a Member of Parliament for Herefordshire. His tenure was followed by the joint mastership of Lord Brassey and Mr. H. L. Pugh, for many years the Hunt secretary and who founded Cooden Engineering Company. After them, the last Master before the pack was sold was a sister of Mr. Justice Eve who lived in Bexhill. For 25 years the huntsman was Joshua Christian, a character celebrated throughout Sussex, and after him Carey Witherden served for 30 years. The pack declined as the local country became restricted through building and ended under the stress of the first world war.

The earliest reference to local cricket is a match at Hastings in 1822 when four gentlemen of Bexhill defeated four from Hastings. An estate plan of the mid-19th century shows a cricket field where Reginald Road now is, and the pitch on the Down is marked on the Ordnance Survey revision of 1873. In 1893 Viscount Cantelupe laid out a private cricket ground where he entertained the South African tourists in 1894 and two years later the Australian Test team, the most famous match in local history. This ground was cut up to make Magdalen and Manor Roads in 1898 and Lord De La Warr (as Viscount Cantelupe had then become) laid out a second ground adjoining Dorset Road which is now part of St. Richard's School playing fields, and where the first Town Club played until 1912. In the early years of the present century Mr. Ebenezer Howard, the first mayor of the borough, organised cricket festivals at his home Birchington House (afterwards St. Wilfrid's School), Collington Lane, and which were notable for prodigious scoring. Nor were the ladies backward: there is a record of a Ladies XI in 1889 and Countess De La Warr, mother of the present Earl, played in a Manor House match. Later cricket was popular with several of the independent girls schools, especially the Beehive, which had a professional coach.

After the first world war the present Bexhill Town Club was formed and leased the ground now the home of the Sidley Club, and which had been laid out at the turn of the century by Mr. A. J. Brook, son of the famous Master of the Bexhill Harriers. 'A. J.' dominated the local cricket scene for more than 50 years; in 1862 he was one of 22 in a match against an All-England XI at Hastings, and he raised a team to play the Australians on their first visit to this country. At Little Common a club was formed in 1883, and at Sidley there were organised games in the 1890s, but the present club dates from 1901. It acquired its ground in 1948, naming it Gulliver's from a generous benefactor. Since then the Town Club has played at the Polegrove where M.C.C. elevens and strong touring sides contribute to the fixture lists.

The game which has most influenced Bexhill's expansion is golf, though

closely followed by bowls. The first local golf club was formed in 1880 and until the second world war played over a course from the East Parade to Galley Hill, with greens on both sides of the railway line. This Bexhill Golf Club had as its first honorary captain Mr. A. J. (afterwards the 1st Earl) Balfour, an enthusiastic player of the time. The first clubhouse, extended in 1912, was adapted from Marine Cottages, one of the few original buildings south of the railway and not demolished until 1966. Its site is now within the grounds of the convalescent home of the Society of Graphic and Allied Trades. In 1906 an exhibition game was played over the course by the famous professionals James Braid and J. H. Taylor, and two years later Harry Vardon played in a match. The club was re-formed in 1937, squash courts, which still remain, opened, and a bowling green laid down. The course, reconstructed the next year, remained popular until the club closed early in the second world war when the land was included in the coastal defence belt to which access was restricted and much of it commandeered for agriculture. Among the club's professionals were the father of Max Faulkner (himself born at Bulverhythe) and Arthur Mitchell, a cousin of Abe Mitchell, a celebrated professional for many years.

It is doubtful whether any enterprise has done more to bring the high-class resident and visitor on whom the prosperity of Bexhill has largely depended than the construction in 1911 of Cooden Beach golf course. This was laid out by the 8th Earl De La Warr over the old Cooden Manor estate and opened, together with the clubhouse, the following year, an occasion marked by the visit of the best-known professionals of the day including Braid, Ted Ray and George Duncan. In 1959 the 9th Earl De La Warr sold the club to a company formed among the members. Among tournaments staged at Cooden was the 1924 English Ladies championship when Miss Joyce Wethered won the last of her five consecutive victories. The club's first professional, Fred Robson, was second to Bobby Jones in the British Open championship of 1927, coached the British team which won the Walker Cup from the United States for the first time, and once beat Walter Hagen, then British Open champion, in an exhibition round at Cooden. He was succeeded as 'pro' by Michael Bingham, and then by W. J. Stait for 23 years, and he in turn by R. Southall.

The increasing popularity of golf after the first world war led to the formation in 1924 of the Highwoods Club, the course over the former Clinch Green and Grinses farms, opened the following year, being laid out by the 'Grand Old Man of golf', J. H. Taylor, who considered it one of the most sporting courses in the country. The Clinch Green farm granary was converted and extended to make the present clubhouse. A company, the New Highwoods Golf Club Ltd., was formed from among the members in 1931 and in 1955 leased the course from the Sussex and Dorking Brick Co., Ltd., now part of the Redland Group of companies which owns the extensive Lunsford brickworks, purchasing the course in 1971. Almost

throughout the club's history the professionals have been R. W. McLean who served for nearly 30 years, and then his son.

Bexhill began to grow as a resort at a time when lawn tennis was becoming popular and the game enjoyed a great vogue for many years. The first club had courts on the west side of Devonshire Road, moving to Egerton Park in 1888. A little later there were courts at the Sackville Hotel and a club there moved to the Dorset Road ground where the game had a monopoly after the departure of the Town Cricket Club in 1912. This ground became the home of the Bexhill and Sutherland Tennis Clubs, and open and inter-county tournaments were staged there until closure was enforced by the second world war. The former Cooden Country Club also provided courts where Helen Wills Moody once played an exhibition game. Tennis in Egerton Park has continued except for the war years and the Bexhill Lawn Tennis Club met a demand there in the 1960s. At the end of the decade a Social and Tennis Club was formed with private courts.

Croquet, which enjoyed great social prestige for many sedate years, flourished from the start in 1899 of a club which played where Gullivers Bowling Club is now in Knole Road, then the Cantelupe Gardens. It later became the Bexhill Croquet Club and held its last tournament shortly before the outbreak of the second world war, after which the game never revived in the town. Croquet was also played at Cooden Country Club which held its first tournament in 1923.

A gymnasium for the 'cultivation of athletic sports' was opened in Station Road in 1892, but the present Bexhill Amateur Athletic Club, which has played a memorable part in the sporting record of the town, dates from 1919. After occupying modest premises it started a fund in 1934 to build a sports centre, being greatly helped by Alderman W. N. Cuthbert, six times mayor of the borough, who gave his first mayoral salary as a donation. As a result the foundation stone of the Sports Centre in Little Common Road, on the site of an old mission hall, was laid on Coronation Day 1937 and the following year the site and the Athletic Club's camp in the High Woods were inspected by the Duke of Gloucester who was touring Sussex as president of the National Association of Boys Clubs. The Sports Centre, completed in 1940, was not occupied by the Athletic Club until after the second world war since when it has continued to be run on an entirely voluntary basis and has catered for the healthy recreation of many hundreds of young men.

The popularity of cycling in the late Victorian Age caused the 8th Earl De La Warr to construct a cycling track along the East Parade in 1896, and in this and the following summer cycling meetings were held on his Manor House cricket ground, attracting competitors from a wide area. On the second occasion the prizes were presented by the Grand Duke Michael of Russia, an uncle of the last Czar, and who had stood godfather to Lord and Lady De La Warr's youngest daughter. The Grand Duke was staying that year at Groombridge near the Buckhurst estate.

Later cycling meetings were organised in Egerton Park by the Bexhill Cycling Club, which was followed after the first world war by a club known as the Bexhill Wheelers.

After golf, especially in recent years, bowls has been the game that has done most to encourage the growth of Bexhill. Like croquet, it was first played in private gardens, and the first public green in the town, opened in Egerton Park in 1907, is now the home of the Spartan Club founded in 1920. The green was first used by the Bexhill Bowling Club which also dates from 1907 and is the oldest in the borough. An attempt several years earlier to form a bowls section of St. Barnabas' Cricket Club (one of the forerunners of the first Town Club) failed to prosper. A club was formed at Sidley during the first world war, playing for some years on a green where the car park is now, and since 1952 at the Buxton Drive recreation ground. In 1970 the club merged with the Highlands Bowling Club formed from the Highways Department of the Corporation.

The first Cumberland green in Polegrove was opened in 1925 and a second the next year, leading to the inauguration of the August Week open tournament in 1933, in which year the first local women's club was also started. The year also saw the first indoor rinks in Bexhill, opened at the Egerton Park Pavilion, and which is now the home of the Indoor Bowling Association. In 1952 Mr. Charles Gulliver, the generous benefactor of Sidley Cricket Club and other sporting and social organisations in the town, opened a bowling green at the Knole Road ground which he had acquired and which before the second world war had been the home of the Bexhill Croquet Club. Mr. Gulliver, for many years prominent in the theatrical world, being at one time chairman of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, had early in life been the first secretary of the Automobile Association. In 1954 he built a pavilion for indoor bowls and club facilities at Knole Road, and in 1971 his son transferred to Gullivers Bowling Club there the freehold of the land and buildings.

The first football club of which there is any record was formed in 1889 and played on a pitch in the vicinity of the present fire station in London Road, then Belle Hill Farm. Several more teams were started during the 1890s and others followed until the first world war took nearly all the players into the Services. Afterwards a Bexhill Club competed in the Sussex League at a time when the Sidley Club, which dated from before 1914, was enjoying its most successful years. In 1927 the Bexhill and Bexhill United Clubs amalgamated and played as Bexhill Town in the Sussex County League, years which also saw the success of the St. Barnabas' Club in junior competitions. After the second world war the Bexhill Wanderers Club, which had been formed in 1937, provided a nucleus for a revived Town Club which has won the County League championship three times, and a memorable occasion was a charity game with the famous Arsenal side in 1948.

Hockey was played in the early years of this century and there was a Bexhill club, but a new organisation came into being in 1925. After the second world

war the South Saxons Club was formed to cater for local enthusiasts.

The first Rugby football match in Bexhill was played in 1925 between Hastings and the Old Haileyburians. It led to the inclusion of Bexhill in the Hastings club, as association which exists to this day and now benefits, with the Town Cricket Club, from the pavilion in Polegrove, to build which an appeal was launched in 1968 and the building opened in 1971.

Early local interest in shooting derived from the days of the Volunteers, and until the development of the De La Warr estate there was a range between the East Parade and the railway line. A Rifle Club was formed in 1903 and later there were others, including ones for small-bore shooting. At first the Battle and Eastbourne open ranges were used, but owing to their inconvenience Mr. Walter Smith, one of the pioneers of local government in the town, provided a range at his farm at Worsham which was also used by a Ladies Rifle Club and the Volunteer Training Corps formed early in the first world war. Subsequently the Territorial Army drill halls provided small bore ranges, and interest was maintained with varying success into the 1960s.

The town's Rowing Club was formed in 1893, its colours of red, green and white, which it retains to this day, being chosen at a meeting at the Manor House over which Lady Cantelupe presided. The first local regatta was also held that year, and the Rowing and Marine Club, as it became, had a successful existence (although the boathouse was destroyed by fire in 1900) until 1906 when the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway raised its charges for conveying boats to other coastal regattas. The club then closed, the boats being sold by auction, and it was not revived until 1925 during the mayoralty of Councillor (later Alderman) R. C. Sewell who had been associated with it from its early years and became life-president. This revival led three years later to that of the regatta which has continued ever since except for the second world war, and is one of the chief sporting events in the summer calendar. In 1966 the club won the championship of the coast for the first time.

A primitive swimming bath was constructed in Egerton Park in the late 1880s by Mr. J. W. Webb who owned the park as part of the Egerton Park estate until 1901 when it was taken over by the Urban Council. He lined a salting depression with concrete and brought sea water to it through an iron pipe from the shore. The present Swimming Club dates from 1893 and in the early years of the present century it had a powerful water polo side which won the Sussex county championship three times, while W. C. Greed, son of 'Honest John' Greed, one of the first aldermen of the borough, was a champion swimmer in his day. The swimming bath was modernised in 1937 and again in an extensive reconstruction in the 1960s. In 1901 Bexhill achieved fame, if not notoriety, by being the first seaside resort to allow mixed bathing at certain times. Hitherto the sexes had been rigorously segregated.

A sailing section was formed in connection with the Marine Club, which became the Kursaal Club in 1905 and closed three years later. After this sailing had no local organisation until 1947 when the present Club was established, the fine headquarters on the site of the old Kursaal being opened in 1965.

The local organisation of sea angling dates from 1893 when an East Sussex branch of the British Sea Anglers Society was started with headquarters at Bexhill. This resulted from the efforts of Mr. T. F. Garrett, who had come to reside in the town from Hastings and who was also the founder of the Rowing Club and regatta that year. The branch was discontinued, however, and in 1914 a Bexhill Sea Angling Association was formed after the success of a sea angling festival promoted by the Borough Entertainments Association. After the second world war the present club was not re-started until 1954.

On Whit-Monday 1902 Bexhill burst into national fame with the holding, along a course from Galley Hill to the De La Warr Parade, of the first motor racing trials in England, organised by the Automobile Club with the 8th Earl De La Warr. Among 200 competitors was Alfred Harmsworth (afterwards Lord Northcliffe), founder of the *Daily Mail* and who did much to popularise motoring; his younger brother Leicester afterwards bought the Manor House and estate. Unfortunately, a parade resident whose access to his house was restricted by the racing secured an injunction against the use of that part of the parade for such events, and no further meeting was possible until 1904 when the timed track was altered to omit that section.

This meeting, the golden jubilee of which was celebrated by a rally of the Veteran Car Club over the same route in 1954, was the first of a successful series, some being combined with carnivals and battles of flowers, though their popularity declined as motor cars became more common and the novelty of the meetings wore off. In 1907, however, S. F. Edge, a well-known pioneer motorist, set up a record of 73 miles an hour in his 80 horse-power six-cylinder Napier car. Bexhill ceased to be a venue for motor racing trials with the opening that year of the famous Brooklands track, while a scheme of the National Motor Course Company for a track where Cooden golf course is now proved abortive. In the 1920s the Kent and Sussex Light Car Club held trials along the West Parade, until in 1925 the Royal Automobile Club withdrew permits for such meetings on public highways

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

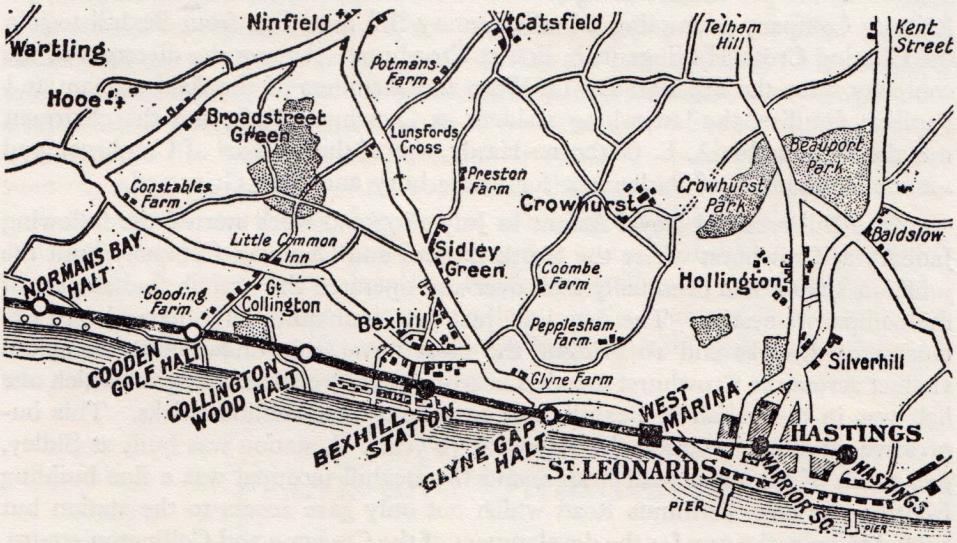
Communications

LIKE MOST SEASIDE TOWNS, Bexhill owes much of its development to the railways, but when the London Brighton and South Coast Company opened its single line between Lewes and Bulverhythe in June 1846 it ran wholly through fields in the parish, for Bexhill was still the village on the hill, reached from the tiny station, which then stood on the north side of the line only, along a track leading to what is now Sea Road. Promoted by the Brighton Lewes and Hastings Railway Company, and reputedly encouraged by the aged Duke of Wellington for military purposes, the line had received Parliamentary sanction in 1844, but the project was taken over by the London Brighton and South Coast Company and remained part of that system until the formation of the Southern Railway under the Railways Act of 1921. The line was extended from Bulverhythe into Hastings in 1851, and in the meantime the necessity to journey into Brighton in order to get to London was removed by the opening of the Keymer Junction loop south of Lewes in 1847. A spur line to Eastbourne was not opened until 1871 and the Polegate junctions ten years later. Until the second world war many London trains continued to use the now defunct direct line between Polegate and Stone Cross.

With the growth of Bexhill south of the railway, a new station fronting Devonshire Square was built in 1891 and the accommodation on the north side improved. Later in the decade a new station was proposed in conjunction with the De La Warr estate on the east side of the town, but this was not proceeded with and instead the railway company built the Central station and extended the old platforms to meet it. This was opened in 1902. At the same time the old station buildings, including the former stationmaster's house on the north side of the line which had been built in 1846, were demolished. A few months later the subway which connected Devonshire Square with Station Road was replaced by the present footbridge. In the years when the De La Warr family occupied the Manor House many distinguished visitors were ceremonially received at the station by the stationmaster dutifully attired in full uniform including frock coat. Royalty came

that way, as did the Lord Mayor of London to open the Town Hall, on which occasion his state coach was off-loaded at the little sidings.

In 1905 a motor train service was begun between St. Leonards and Eastbourne, with halts at Collington, Cooden (then quite undeveloped), Normans Bay (this name replaced the ancient one of The Sluice for that locality), Pevensey Bay, and Pevensey and Westham. There was also one at Glyne Gap between Bexhill and St. Leonards but this was closed after some years. The motor train service continued until the Victoria–Hastings line was electrified in 1935, on which occasion



XV.—The railway halts opened with the introduction of a motor train service between Hastings and Eastbourne in 1905. That at Glyne Gap was later closed.

the Lord Mayor of London (Sir Stephen Killik), made a ceremonial journey and paid a courtesy visit to the Town Hall at Bexhill, where he was received by the Mayor (Earl De La Warr) and afterwards visited the De La Warr Pavilion, then nearly completed. A consequence of the electrification of the railway line was the removal of the old covered cab-yard fronting Station Road to allow for the electricity transformer station. The present Cooden Beach railway station supplanted the little halt there the following year.

As the south coast line was built before modern Bexhill existed, access between the older and newer parts of the town has always been a problem. The Sackville Arch was enlarged from a cattle arch in 1892; other former cattle arches were at Cooden and Westcourt Drive; Sea Road bridge was widened in 1905 to allow the

passage of the tramway service; Manor Road bridge was built in 1927, replacing a level-crossing at Dorset Road South; another level-crossing, at Pages Lane, was closed in the 1930s, an access which would have been of great value to the residential developments in that area in more recent years.

The railway to London via Lewes, which in any case took travellers to Victoria Station, early led to a Bexhill demand for a more direct route, and a scheme in the early 1880s included provision for a railway bridge near the foot of Belle Hill. In the next decade the greater number of travellers requiring improved rail facilities to the City and the increase in visitors as seaside holidays became more popular in the pre-motor car age, resulted in the Bexhill, Sidley and Crowhurst Railway Company promoting a Parliamentary Bill for a line from Bexhill to join the Charing Cross–Hastings main line at Crowhurst. Among the directors of the company were the 8th Earl De La Warr and members of the Ashburnham and Papillon families, the latter long resident at Crowhurst Park, and the chairman was the Honourable A. E. Gathorne-Hardy, son of the 1st Earl of Cranbrook and sometime Member of Parliament for Canterbury and East Grinstead.

The Bill received Royal Assent in July 1897 and work started the following January at Crowhurst where the South Eastern and Chatham Company built the junction station and eventually took over and operated the branch line as part of the company's system. The new line, just over four miles long, necessitated extensive earthworks and 16 bridges, the most formidable undertaking being the viaduct across the Crowhurst marshes nearly a quarter of a mile long, of which one half was in the parish of Bexhill, and containing nine million bricks. This impressive structure bestrode the valley for 70 years. A station was built at Sidley, just south of the main road bridge, and the Bexhill terminal was a fine building fronting the new Terminus Road which not only gave access to the station but helped to open the way for the development of the Cranston and Collington estates. There were also extensive facilities for goods traffic, while the new railway, both in construction and operation, did much to help the growth and prosperity of Sidley.

The line was ceremonially opened at the end of May 1902 and public services began the next day, June 1. The official luncheon was held at the Metropole Hotel and the company's local employees were regaled in the booking hall of the new Bexhill station. After several changes of name this became Bexhill West in 1929. The completion of the railway, together with the opening of the Central station by the London Brighton and South Coast company, the conferment of a charter of incorporation on Bexhill, and the first motor races ever held in England, which took place from Galley Hill along the East Parade, made the spring of 1902 the most memorable period in local history.

In 1930 a firm of town planning consultants proposed a new station fronting Town Hall Square, with a loop line linking the Crowhurst branch line with the coast railway via a bridge over Terminus Road. This imaginative part of a scheme

to re-design the civic centre never materialised. During the first world war, when the Sidley station footbridge was requisitioned, the branch line was closed, and it was again shut in the second world conflict, after which the Sidley station building on the main road never re-opened and was eventually sold. It became first a club and then a garage until demolished to make way for modern premises.

In 1958 the two steam engines which drew the branch line trains and were affectionately known as the 'Crowhurst Fliers', gave way to a diesel-electric service. Five years later, under the Beeching Plan, the closure of the line was proposed, and despite strong local objections was confirmed by the Minister of Transport, becoming effective in June 1964. Subsequently the extensive railway land bordering the West station was bought by the Corporation and developed as the West Trading Estate, and the old station building was used as the borough Civil Defence centre until the disbandment of the Corps in 1968. The Down railway arch which had carried the line over Little Common Road was demolished in 1967 and the railway land between that point and Sidley acquired by the Corporation for various improvements in the locality. Any hopes that the Crowhurst line might at some time be revived were finally shattered (in more ways than one) when the disused and sadly decaying viaduct across the marshes was demolished by explosive in May 1969. In itself an awe-inspiring sight, this brilliantly contrived operation, with the sequence of explosions reverberating over the countryside, was perhaps a fitting farewell to a magnificent example of Victorian skill and workmanship; it was also a milestone in the story of Bexhill.

Trams and Omnibuses

Rival schemes dating from 1897 for the promotion of a tramway service at Bexhill, in which Mr. William Murphy of the Provincial Tramways Company was prominent, culminated in the formation of the Hastings and District Electric Tramways Company Ltd., in 1904. The laying of Bexhill's tramlines began in Endwell Road in May the following year and Sea Road bridge was widened to accommodate the new traffic. The Bexhill portion of the company's service, from West Marina at St. Leonards to the Metropole Hotel, was opened in April 1906, the fare for the whole distance being threepence with a three-halfpenny concession on workmen's tickets. The depot for this section was at Bulverhythe, where the old sheds, which still stand, were used until air raid damage in 1941, after which the then trolley-bus depot was transferred to Silverhill at St. Leonards. In July 1906 the tram service was extended to Cooden, the greater part of this section running through open fields. The route was made up to become Cooden Drive shortly before the first world war. In 1907 the Town Council rejected a move to ask the company to extend the service to Sidley.

Twenty years later, partly due to the competition of motor buses, the company obtained an Act of Parliament to replace the trams with trolley buses and these came into service in September 1928. Under the Act the Corporations of Bexhill and Hastings had power to acquire the portions of the undertaking in their separate boroughs in 1945 or thereafter at five yearly intervals, but these rights were never exercised. The trolley buses, as the trams had been before them, were powered from the company's generating station at Ore until 1935, after which the supply was taken from the Bexhill and Hastings municipal electricity undertakings. From the Hastings end of De La Warr Road the tramway track ran over fields behind the Bull Inn to emerge on to the Bulverhythe road; this was called 'reserved track' and special Board of Trade permission was obtained for it.

Meanwhile Bexhill had been a pioneer in omnibus services, for as far back as 1901 the Urban Council granted licences to the Bexhill Motor Company of Sackville Road (local authorities issued public service vehicle licences until the Road Traffic Act of 1930). The company's fleet of four 14-seater Daimler omnibuses ran to Hastings, Sidley, Ninfield and Little Common, with occasional charabanc trips into the countryside. The service ended early in 1903, however, partly due to the Town Council restrictions on petrol storage and also because the Corporation of Hastings would not allow the company to pick up fare-paying passengers there. The vehicles were afterwards used at Birmingham for a short time. In the autumn of 1903 James Friend and Son, of Marine Mews, Sackville Road, announced the introduction of an omnibus service, but no Sunday orders were taken as Mr. Friend was a founder and trustee of the Beulah Baptist Church. Later in the decade Mr. Herbert Pulham, a notable figure in local motor engineering, ran motor trips, and in 1913 experimented with a Daimler double-decker omnibus which was too high to go under the Sackville Arch. The next local service was developed by Mr. E. C. Grime, operating under the name of the Bexhill Motor Company, and who was granted a licence for a Mercedes wagonette. This operated between Marina, Little Common and Sidley.

After the first world war the local services expanded rapidly. In May 1919 Carter and Lidstone Ltd. ran services to the outlying parts of the town and later to Hooe, Catsfield, Ninfield and Battle. These were taken over by Maidstone and District Motor Services in 1926. Another service, that of Mr. Thomas Sheather of Catsfield, which ran between Bexhill and Battle, was withdrawn in 1925 under competition from the Maidstone company whose present services to Hooe, Catsfield and Battle are the direct descendants of those started by individual proprietors in the energetic 1920s. Maidstone and District Motor Services itself had started in 1911, and its first service through Bexhill, the Hastings to Eastbourne 'O' route (letters not giving way to numbers until 1921), began in June 1919. Most of the company's present local services were started in the 1920s.

This brings the record to the 1935 acquisition of the Hastings Tramways

Company by the Maidstone and District, which thus acquired the monopoly of local road passenger transport it enjoys today. In 1956 the company successfully promoted a Parliamentary Bill to wind up the Tramways company, replace the trolley-buses by motor vehicles, and abolish the purchase powers of the Bexhill and Hastings corporations. The new system came into being in June 1959 after a commemorative 'last run' of the popular trolley-buses from the old Metropole stop to Hastings, a civic party making the final journey.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Public Services

Post Office

UNTIL 1914 BEXHILL remained under the postal jurisdiction of Hastings, the first local sub-office being at a cottage attached to 'Genista', Belle Hill, the home of the Wallis family—Dr. F. Wallis and his son Dr. F. M. Wallis who became a leader of Bexhill's fight for better sanitation after the typhoid epidemic of 1880. A post-receiving house at Little Common was served from Bexhill, but that at Sidley received the mail from Battle, the postman walking between the two places. At Little Common the Elliott family conducted the post office for many years, while at Sidley that of Wickens long served the community in this way.

The Bexhill office was eventually established in Old Town High Street under the charge of the Reeves family who had a general business which included grocery, drapery, milling and a bakery. Mr. Henry Reeves was chairman of the Hastings Highways Board which managed the few roads Bexhill possessed until the formation of the Local Board (which he opposed) in 1884. Deliveries of mail included those to the few scattered dwellings on the farmland south of the railway where the modern town now stands. The Reeves were succeeded by Mr. Caleb Nye whose name first appears in 1878, and after him his daughter was for long postmistress in the Old Town, while his son became deputy head postmaster of Bexhill. After the expansion of the 1880s a post office was opened at Bexhill railway station (which then fronted Station Road opposite where Devonshire Square now is) and the stationmaster also acted as postmaster there.

In 1897 an independent sub-office was opened in Buckhurst Road (now occupied by the Inland Revenue) and Mr. W. H. Chapman who was appointed sub-postmaster became the borough's first head postmaster when Bexhill was granted postal independence from Hastings in 1914. Among other services which the post office then provided was a temporary office and telegraph facilities at the motor races held on the De La Warr and East Parades in the first decade of the new century, while sub-offices to cater for the expanding town were so well sited

that when a new one was granted in the 1960s it was the first such addition since 1925.

The town's growth south of the railway, however, made the Buckhurst Road office increasingly inconvenient, and in 1915 a salaried sub-office was opened in Endwell Road, where the architecture matched that of the adjoining and distinctive Clock House at the corner with Sea Road. This office was closed in November 1931 with the opening of the present head office in Devonshire Square, where the garage which had been the old Devonshire mews was also acquired. Earl De La Warr flew from London, landing on Cooden golf course (which the family then owned) to attend the opening ceremony of the commanding new head office. Part of this was reconstructed in 1970 to give improved facilities, but the next year Bexhill was again, after 57 years, placed under the headpostmastership of Hastings.

Telephones

Six years after Viscount Cantelupe (the 8th Earl De La Warr) had installed a private telephone service on his Manor House estate, Bexhill's first public exchange, with 33 subscribers, was opened in 1898 in a room on the western side of Devonshire Square. The service was operated under licence from the Post Office for the telephone system did not come under direct departmental control until January 1912 when the National Telephone Company was taken over. The number 'Bexhill 1' was that of T. J. Baker and Son, fishmongers, Devonshire Road, and it still is at the time of writing.

In 1926 the exchange was moved across Devonshire Square to part of the site where the present head post office now stands, catering for more subscribers, and a further move was made in 1930 to the completed part of the new office. At the time Bexhill occupied third place in the country for the number of telephones in relation to population. The continuance of such a high percentage led to the exchange having a manual switchboard of such capacity that its ability to cope with the demand resulted in several years' delay in conversion to the automatic system, harder-pressed towns receiving priority.

Meanwhile in 1912 a Cooden exchange had been opened in the sitting room behind a shop in Cooden Sea Road, and later transferred to Farley House. After further switchboard extensions an automatic exchange was opened in 1963, among those present at the official ceremony being Brigadier E. W. P. Broad, a Deputy Lieutenant of Sussex, who had been one of the original subscribers on the first exchange in 1912. Standard Trunk Dialling was introduced in October 1970.

At Bexhill the Post Office purchased in 1964 the former Ritz cinema in Buckhurst Road, demolishing the building to make way for an automatic exchange, work on which began in 1969. In 1968 control of the local service passed from the Head Postmaster to the Area Telephone Manager at Tunbridge Wells.

Water and Gas

Until the late 1880s Bexhill's water supply was obtained from the many wells in the parish. It was the farmyard contamination of one of these that led to the typhoid epidemic of 1880 and the consequent formation of a Local Board of Health, independent of the Battle Board of Guardians which had been the sanitary authority. The two deepest wells were those at 'Linkwell' in High Street and at the convalescent home in Upper Sea Road, both of which went down some 120 feet. Many of the wells were re-plotted during the second world war with a view to emergency use if bombing disrupted the town supply. Some of them dated back to the days when the King's German Legion was encamped at Bexhill during the Napoleonic wars. 'Linkwell', one of the old houses of Bexhill, was for many years the home of the Day family, of whom Richard Day was a notable cricketer who also did much to further the building of St. Mark's Church at Little Common. The home in Old Town, opened by the Metropolitan Convalescent Homes Institution in 1881, several years before a piped water supply was available, was the first of many such establishments which made Bexhill notable as a health resort.

In 1883 Mr. John Webb's construction for the 7th Earl De La Warr of the sea wall that became the East Parade induced him, with two associates, to promote a Parliamentary Bill to provide water and gas supplies in the growing town where he had received land, which became the Egerton Park estate, in part-payment for building the wall. For the water supply a well and pumping station were proposed at Sidley, in a field near the modern Preston Road. The gasworks were to be north of the railway line on Lord De La Warr's land. However, the Earl and a number of residents succeeded in getting Mr. Webb's Bill rejected by a House of Lords Select Committee. The next year Lord De La Warr himself, with several Hastings businessmen who had begun to speculate in residential building in Bexhill, formed the Bexhill Water and Gas Company and promoted a Bill which was unopposed and received Parliamentary sanction in June 1885.

The principal directors of the company were Lord De La Warr, who was chairman until 1895, the year before his death, and Mr. Robert Kersey, chairman of the Globe Building Society which financed much of the development of Mr. Webb's Egerton Park estate. Mr. Kersey succeeded Lord De La Warr as chairman, and when he died in 1904 his son, Mr. A. H. Kersey, became chairman. The company established waterworks at Wrestwood Road (portions of which still exist), consisting of a well, pumping station and reservoir. A piped supply became available in 1887 and the first domestic connections were made the following June. Iron deposits caused trouble in the early days, which was not surprising as there was a chalybeate spring near the present junction of London Road and St. George's Road. It was long frequented by the inhabitants and the owner even supplied iron cups and chairs.

In 1892 water was found on Lord Brassey's land at Buckholt and a well sunk there was connected to the Wrestwood works. Six years later Sweet Willow Wood, west of Ninfield Road, was acquired and boreholes there augmented the supply. The present pumping station was erected in 1936. In 1904 the company obtained an Act of Parliament to supply water to several neighbouring parishes and built extensive works at Hazards Green and a two-million gallon reservoir at Standard Hill in the parish of Ninfield, these being completed in 1907. In extension work at Hazards Green in 1917 two men lost their lives. Unfortunately the Hazards Green yield failed to realise expectations and in 1924 the company began to exploit resources at Cowbeech, near Hailsham, where land had been acquired and a borehole sunk in 1907. A proposal to increase charges to consumers to meet the extra expenditure was opposed by the Corporation which then promoted a Parliamentary Bill to acquire the undertaking, as well as to obtain other powers for the better administration of the borough. This Bill became the Bexhill Corporation Act of 1925 and under it the water and gas undertakings were transferred to municipal control in April 1926. Later the Corporation obtained Parliamentary Orders for abstracting water from the Wallers Haven and Cuckmere Rivers to augment the borough supply and extend the piped service to rural parishes included in the 1904 Act.

After the second world war, in which the Borough Water Department performed prodigies in supplying the many Service units in the town and hinterland, a grouping of the Bexhill municipal, Hastings county borough, Rye borough and Battle rural district undertakings was proposed under the Water Act of 1945, but the Town Council obviated such a merger, which would have been without financial compensation, by selling the Bexhill undertaking to the Eastbourne Waterworks Company. A Ministry of Housing and Local Government Order confirming this came into force in April 1962. During its years under municipal control the Bexhill undertaking was recognised as a model of its kind and this, with the diversity of its sources of supply, led to its inspection on many occasions by water interests both in this country and from overseas.

In 1854 the parish of Bexhill had been included in the statutory area of the Hastings and St. Leonards Gas Company but no attempt was made to supply the village and in 1885 the Local Board provided oil lamps for street lighting. The Bexhill Water and Gas Act obtained by Lord De La Warr and his associates that year repealed the Hastings and St. Leonards company's powers over the Bexhill area and enabled the new Bexhill company to build gasworks in Ashdown Road on the De La Warr estate. Gas was first supplied in the autumn of 1887 and the streets lit by this means in September the following year, an innovation marked by a procession through the town. At first there were 80 street lamps, a number which rose to 250 before the Urban Council illuminated the streets by electricity from its own undertaking in 1900. The honour of turning on the first street gas lamp fell

to Mr. Stephen Carey who had worked on the building of the gasworks for Mr. John Webb and who became a well-known public works contractor in the town. He re-built the West Parade after the great storms of 1910–11, constructed the Central Parade, and laid out many roads among other contracts.

The gasworks in Ashdown Road proved a deterrent to the residential development of the De La Warr estate in that locality, and at the turn of the century there was a proposal to abandon them and take the town supply from the Glyne Gap installation being built by the Hastings and St. Leonards company. These large works were sited just inside the Bexhill boundary to avoid coal dues then payable to Hastings Corporation. The Glyne Gap works came into full use in 1907 when gas manufacture ceased at the original Hastings works in Queens Road. On the nationalisation of the gas industry in 1949 the Bexhill municipal undertaking was transferred to the Hastings District of the South Eastern Gas Board. The Bexhill works were closed in 1967 following the completion of the main grid service from London via Eastbourne, and those at Glyne Gap ended production in 1969.

The first manager of the Bexhill Water and Gas Company was Mr. Frederick Russell who came in 1887 and until he retired through ill-health in 1904, dying two years later, supervised the entire administration and development of both supplies in the fast-growing town. Afterwards separate water and gas managers were appointed. The first secretary to the company was Mr. R. D. Jesty who had been managing clerk to Cope and Company, Lord De La Warr's solicitors. He was succeeded by his son who served the Water and Gas Company until it was acquired by the Corporation. Mr. Jesty senior was also secretary of the Bexhill, Sidley and Crowhurst Railway company which promoted the Bexhill to Crowhurst branch line until it was taken over by the London and South Eastern Railway Company.

Electricity

Although Bexhill's electricity supply has always been under public control, the first step towards such an undertaking was made by Viscount Cantelupe (the 8th Earl De La Warr) and Mr. Robert Kersey, who in 1895 applied to the Board of Trade for a licence to supply electricity to part of the town. Both were directors of the Bexhill Water and Gas Company of which Mr. Kersey became chairman that year in succession to Lord Cantelupe's father, the 7th Earl De La Warr. They were granted a conditional licence and gave notice of application for a Provisional Order the following year. The Urban Council opposed this and decided to apply for an Order itself, a Gilbertian situation in that the 8th Earl (who had succeeded to the title that year), was chairman of the Council. He and Mr. Kersey opposed the authority's application, but the Board of Trade ruled that the Council should have precedence and the Earl and Mr. Kersey thereupon withdrew their own application, for which they received compensation. After a Local Government Board inquiry and the acceptance of Lord De La Warr's offer of a

site in Ashdown Road for a supply station, the Council negotiated with the British Electric Traction Company whose subsequent Parliamentary Bill to acquire the undertaking was rejected. The Council then proceeded with its own scheme and electric light was first switched on in Bexhill in April 1900. The claim was made that the town was one of the first in the country to supply electricity for domestic purposes.

In between the two world wars increasing demand led to a number of electricity sub-stations which increased to 22 by the time the undertaking was nationalised in 1948. From November 1925, however, on the instructions of the then Electricity Commissioners, a bulk supply was taken from Hastings electricity works as an alternative to further plant extensions in Bexhill. In the 1930s most of the borough was converted from direct to alternating current, and three years after nationalisation, which transferred the municipal undertaking to the South Eastern Electricity Board, the last direct current services were changed over to the standard 240-volt alternating supply. This made redundant the Ashdown Road works which had supplied electricity to the town for 55 years, and the premises became one of the sub-stations. In 1965 a massive installation was completed at Potmans Lane, just outside the borough boundary, on the route of the South Coast super grid between Dungeness nuclear power station and the west country.

Bexhill's first Electrical Engineer was Mr. W. T. Le Feuvre, who at the age of 24 supervised the original cable laying. He died of pneumonia on active service during the first world war. When the undertaking was nationalised the Borough Electrical Engineer, Mr. R. C. Carter, one of the earliest radio experimenters in the town, became local manager for the South Eastern Board and then deputy manager for the Hastings District into which the areas of the former Bexhill and Hastings undertakings were merged.

The Fire Brigade

An attempt to form a fire brigade at Bexhill was made in 1887 by Mr. F. Russell, manager of the Bexhill Water and Gas Company, but a public appeal to buy equipment realised only £51 and the effort was abandoned. After Mr. Russell had refused to form a brigade to serve only the new town south of the railway, a volunteer force for the whole parish was established in 1888. Two years later it was taken over by the Bexhill Local Board and reconstituted the next year under the captaincy of Mr. W. Hardwicke, who was the first manager of the Sackville Hotel. The Rev. E. C. Adams, a member of the Local Board, was the first Fire Brigade committee chairman. A dispute over the captaincy, however, led to a reorganisation of the brigade with Viscount Cantelupe as captain. After he had departed as a newspaper correspondent in the South African War, Mr. F. Wise was captain for a quarter of a century and then Mr. A. J. Stevens, who joined as a

boy messenger in 1902 and retired in 1945. In 1922 he set up an English record with a rescue from 36 feet in 44 seconds in the National Fire Brigades Association's life-saving competitions. The following year the Association held its annual competitions at Bexhill. In 1934 the Bexhill brigade won first prize in all-England for junior life-saving drill in the competitions held at Yeovil.

The first fire station, in Devonshire Square, was eventually demolished to make way for the Head Post Office, opened in 1931. From 1896 to 1971, however, the fire station was at the rear of the Town Hall in Amherst Road, then moving from there to the fine station at the corner of London and Little Common Roads. During the second world war the brigade became part of the National Fire Service. Afterwards it was placed under the control of the East Sussex County Council acting through its Fire Brigade Committee, and is one of the most important stations in the administrative county.

After early horse manuals and hose carts, the town bought its first real fire engine, a Merryweather steamer, in 1895 and it remained in use for 26 years, rejuvenated in its later stages by Mr. Louis Russell of the old-established local motor firm which bears his name and who became known as the 'father of the brigade'. A later engine was named Helena in honour of the wife of Alderman R. C. Sewell, who was chairman of the Town Council's Fire Brigade Committee for many years; another was christened Diana (her own name) by Lady De La Warr and driven through the town by her, and a third, the Lady Kitty, was so named by Lord and Lady De La Warr's daughter, now Lady Katharine Giles. An exciting sequel to this last ceremony was that on a test journey with some members of the Town Council aboard, the brakes failed as the vehicle descended Buckhurst Road and it careered across Town Hall Square, only superb driving preventing a serious accident.

In 1908 the brigade was one of several in the district which fought a serious fire at Normanhurst Court the seat of the 1st Lord Brassey, and the same summer occurred the Old Town blaze which gutted the warehouse of Cave Austin and Company and destroyed the Jubilee clock which had been erected by public subscription to commemorate the 1887 jubilee of Queen Victoria. A replica was made and ceremonially started on King Edward VII's birthday the same autumn. In 1924 there occurred the tragic blaze at the St. Leonards Road stores of Miller and Franklin, where the Employment Exchange now stands. One of the firemen was injured and died in hospital, and a marble memorial to him in the borough cemetery was erected by public subscription which also provided a fund to assist his widow and child. The following year St. Wilfrid's School in Collington Lane was severely damaged, and the lack of water resulted in a major overhaul of the town's mains and hydrants. The handsome school building which later became Falconbury (demolished in 1970) was erected on the site of St. Wilfrid's.

In May 1940 the Metropole Hotel, once one of the most important in the

town, was seriously damaged in a spectacular blaze after being in military occupation, and was gutted in a bombing raid the next year. The ruins were demolished in 1955 and the site converted into the putting green next to the De La Warr Pavilion. In 1955 there occurred the worst fire in the town since the war, that at the St. Leonards Road premises of the Ephron Furnishing Company. The site is now occupied by offices which were built for the former British South Africa Company which had transferred part of its administration to Bexhill at the beginning of the second world war.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Hospitals and Health

BEFORE THE OPENING of Bexhill Hospital in 1933 the only such services in the neighbourhood, apart from private nursing homes, were those of the Royal East Sussex Hospital at Hastings and the Buchanan Hospital at St. Leonards, or, for the aged and infirm poor, the Battle workhouse. The hospitals were voluntary institutions assisted with donations and collections from Bexhill; the workhouse was administered by the Battle Board of Guardians until 1930 and then by the East Sussex County Council. The Hastings, St. Leonards and East Sussex Infirmary had been founded in 1841 and stood on the site of the present White Rock Pavilion, being re-built in 1887. The foundation stone of the present Royal East Sussex Hospital was laid with Masonic ceremonial in 1914, but because of the first world war and site difficulties the hospital was not opened until 1923 when King George V gave permission for it to be styled 'Royal'. The cost of the male medical ward was met from a £3,000 appeal at Bexhill. The Buchanan Hospital, taking its name from the lady who inspired it, started in 1881 and the oldest part of the present building dates from 1884. The name was changed from 'General and Eye Hospital' to 'Cottage Hospital' in 1897. Both hospitals are now, like Bexhill, under the Hastings Group Management Committee of the South-East Regional Metropolitan Hospital Board.

The first attempt to establish a hospital at Bexhill was made at the time of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897, the 8th Earl De La Warr offering a site in Wrestwood Road. A house on the Down was also suggested. Unfortunately nothing came of these efforts, and the question of a local hospital was not raised again until after the first world war. Then the increase of Bexhill demands on the Hastings and St. Leonards hospitals, and the fact that voluntary contributions did not always meet the cost of the services provided, caused the project to be revived.

The move which resulted in the Bexhill Hospital was undertaken in 1926, the resolution passed at a public meeting being seconded by Dr. Kenneth Stokes, a practitioner in the town, who had an unbroken connection with the hospital from

the start of the scheme until his death in 1962. The site on Holliers Hill was bought in 1928, building started the next year, and early in 1930 the foundation stone was laid by Lord Marks of Woolwich. A distinguished consulting engineer and former Liberal Member of Parliament, he had, as Sir George Marks, at one time resided at Bexhill. Completed at a cost of nearly £31,000, including the site, the hospital was opened free of debt in May 1933 by Princess Helena Victoria, elder daughter of Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein and Princess Helena, third daughter of Queen Victoria. As well as the capital cost of the building, all the equipment was provided by local donors and the Duchess of York (now the Queen Mother) gave permission for the children's ward to be named after Princess Elizabeth (Her Majesty the Queen) who was born the day after the hospital project had been launched in 1926.

The Nurses Home was built by public subscription in 1934, the foundation stone being laid by the writer Mr. S. P. B. Mais, and the home was opened by the distinguished surgeon Lord Moynihan. An £18,000 legacy then enabled the Outpatients Department to be built; Countess De La Warr, who with her husband was joint-president of the hospital from its inception until it was nationalised in 1948, laying the foundation stone in 1937. The Department, which was greatly extended and modernised in 1966, was opened in July 1938 by Mrs. Walter Elliot (now Baroness Elliot of Harwood), whose husband was Minister of Health and a Parliamentary chief of Lord De La Warr. A scheme for a maternity block was abandoned on the outbreak of the second world war during which the hospital itself suffered some bomb damage.

In 1947, anticipating the Health Act which came into force the next year, a committee representing Bexhill, Hastings and Rye interests prepared an administrative scheme for the area which was largely carried into effect under the present Management Committee, but the Bexhill Hospital ceased to be the voluntary institution for which the town had worked so hard and of which it was fiercely proud. This pride has not lessened in the subsequent years and since 1952 the League of Friends of Bexhill Hospital has raised large sums not only to provide extra amenities and comforts there, but also in assisting capital schemes which might not otherwise have been effected. In 1954 a chapel was built at the hospital by public subscription and in 1962 a staff hall provided by the League, one of many projects completed during the chairmanship of Mr. A. J. Arscott whose father was treasurer of the voluntary hospital from 1933 until 1946.

With the advent of nationalisation there came to an end the League of the Golden Penny, formed in 1928 on the initiative of Mr. A. Vincett Parsons, and which had raised some £9,000 through its modest collection boxes. The first chairman of the Hospital committee in 1926 was Sir Ernest Birch, formerly British Resident in Perak, an office which had been held by his father who was assassinated. Sir Ernest, who was mayor of Bexhill in the silver jubilee year of the

borough (1926-27), was followed as chairman of the Hospital committee by Admiral Sir Charles Anson, to whom the hospital clock is a memorial. As a boy he had been a shipmate in the *Britannia* of the future King George V. In their retirement, both Sir Ernest and Sir Charles were outstanding and able figures in the public life of Bexhill. Two names which will always be associated with Bexhill Hospital are those of Miss A. D. Lawrence, matron from 1948 to 1969, and Mr. F. Geary, secretary and then administrator from 1941 to 1966, periods of service which began in the voluntary days of the institution.

The typhoid epidemic of 1880 had caused Bexhill to be given sanitary powers independent of the Battle Board of Guardians, and in due course the town's first isolation hospital was established with two Berthon-type huts on the Down. A horse-drawn 'fever-van' made its grim round with patients of infectious diseases which are now virtually unknown. In 1902 the huts were moved to a site north of the cemetery in St. Mary's Lane, then so remote that for several years a water cart had to make regular visits, there being no piped supply. The accommodation was improved during the first world war, when the Local Government Board sanctioned new buildings, but plans for a further extension ended with the second world war when the hospital was closed and local patients thereafter cared for under arrangements with neighbouring authorities.

Ambulance

A Bexhill Centre of the St. John Ambulance Association was formed as far back as 1883, encouraged by the patronage of Lady Brassey, of Normanhurst Court. In 1901 a Bexhill division of the St. John Ambulance Brigade was formed, but seceded from the parent body and for 32 years until 1935 had an independent existence as the Bexhill Ambulance Brigade. Its redoubtable secretary was Mr. F. E. Poulton, headmaster of St. Barnabas' School. The brigade's horse-drawn ambulance was superseded in 1918 by a vehicle in which a superstructure, built by a Battle firm, was fitted to an independent chassis by L. Russell and Company. Ten years later this firm designed and built a fabric body for a second ambulance. Under the Health Act of 1948 the East Sussex County Council became responsible for the ambulance service, but that existing at Bexhill was continued with grant help until 1967 before coming directly under the county authority.

Nursing

A few months after the consecration of St. Barnabas' Church in 1891 its Vicar, the Rev. E. Mortlock, engaged a parish nurse, and from this grew nursing associations in both the St. Peter's and St. Barnabas' parishes. This service, for which patients paid modest sums in various categories and according to means, was supplanted in 1919 by the Bexhill Nursing Association, initially encouraged

by the opening, under the East Sussex County Council, of a tuberculosis dispensary at North Street, Sidley, and the introduction of the Maternity and Child Welfare Act.

The association, with three maternity and three district nurses who also acted as health visitors, was supported by voluntary funds and government and county grants. A maternity and child welfare clinic was early started, but an ante-natal clinic was somewhat advanced for the times and there was an appeal for better use of this facility. In 1921 there was successful opposition to a scheme for a maternity home, though later in the decade the borough Medical Officer reported that there was no provision other than the poor law infirmary for cases, unless destitute, of unmarried mothers or illegitimate children, while not until the next decade were arrangements made for difficult maternity cases to be taken either to Hastings or the Battle institution. It was at this time that negotiations were taking place with the East Sussex County Council for a maternity unit at Bexhill Hospital, a project abandoned on the outbreak of war.

In 1935 the local health services for children were co-ordinated in the London Road Clinic, built by the County Council and the first of its kind in East Sussex. The impetus for this scheme, considered very advanced at the time, had come from the Nursing Association which contributed towards the cost. After the second world war the amplification of nursing services of all kinds under the County Council as the health authority led to the disbandment of the Nursing Association in 1970 after half a century of invaluable service to the borough in which it had voluntarily, and with limited means, pioneered social work and welfare now officially provided and generally 'taken for granted'.

Convalescent Homes

Dominating even today the southern slopes of the Old Town, the imposing home of the former Metropolitan Convalescent Institution looks out over a seaside resort that was only fields and marshes when the building was opened in 1881. It was the first of the many convalescent and residential homes which have made Bexhill widely recognised as a health resort, and which have played an important role in its economy. They have also enabled the town, fortunate in its climate and situation, to help patients from other places, especially the London area, and it began to do so at a time when Victorian social reformers were seeking to alleviate the bad housing conditions of the metropolis.

It was in this that the Metropolitan Convalescent Institution had a romantic origin. In 1840 a medical student at St. Bartholomew's Hospital saw a poor woman sitting in one of the wards crying; she had been told that the hospital could do no more for her, but she needed convalescence. She had nowhere to go. The young man enlisted the help of his brother, who was a clergyman, and other sympathisers, with the result that the Institution was founded in two cottages at Harrow Weald.

A home at Carshalton, Surrey, preceded the move to Bexhill where the institution, built on what had been Cheeseman's farm, soon drew attention to Bexhill's advantages as a place for convalescence, so that within a few years the number of such homes in the town multiplied rapidly.

In 1905 the Institution built the home at Cooden in the handsome style of a Georgian country mansion, and this became the men's home, that in Old Town thereafter being reserved for women patients. In the second world war the Cooden home became an emergency maternity unit. Both homes were taken over by the South East Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board under the Health Act of 1948 and have since been administered by the Hastings Group Management Committee, the title 'Metropolitan' being eventually dropped. In 1970, after a proposal to adapt the Cooden home as a geriatric unit under a scheme pressed by the League of Friends of Bexhill Hospital, the Regional Board announced plans to use the building for men's and women's convalescence, and to accommodate mentally sub-normal patients at Old Town. In the 1950s the League of Friends pioneered voluntary assistance to the two homes and a separate Comforts Guild was formed in 1956.

St. Faith's Home was opened at Little Common in 1887 in connection with the London Refuge, its 20 inmates being taught housework, laundry and needlework, accomplishments which caused the girls to be 'much in demand'. This home closed in 1903, but in 1910 the property was bought by the Queen's (now the Queen Elizabeth) Hospital for Children and became the Little Folk's Home which it remains to this day. On part of the site now occupied by Bexhill Motors Ltd., London Road, the Daisy Home was opened in 1891 to receive delicate girls from the East End of London, and another home for poor children was started the following year 'in a large and airy house of good elevation near St. Barnabas' Church'; the first inmates came from the Victoria Hospital and the Evelina Hospital for Children in London. This home, which later moved to Middlesex Road, closed early in the new century. In 1894 Orchard House, St. John's Road, became St. Mildred's Convalescent Home for friendless girls from London and was supported by the Diocese of Chichester, while a major social development of the decade was the opening the same year of Nazareth House whose work has been described in connection with the Roman Catholic community.

An early 20th-century venture was the acquisition of the former Marine Hotel (where Dalmore Court now stands) as a seaside home of rest for London drapery assistants. It was known as Roberts Marine Mansions, having been bought in 1903 by Mr. John Reynolds Roberts, a prominent London draper. Bombed during the second world war, the remains of the building were demolished in 1954 and the present block of flats erected on the site in 1961. In 1907 there was a visit by Princess Louise Augusta of Schleswig-Holstein to open a Church Army home in Egerton Road. The Little Folk's Home, as a seaside branch of the Queen's

Hospital for Children already mentioned, started in 1911 and an annexe was opened in 1930 by the Duke of York (afterwards King George VI) who was the hospital's president.

In the 1920s a house in Egerton Road was given by a clergyman as a home for fatherless boys and named 'Ellendeane' after his wife. After some vicissitudes and several moves the home, which had been under the Church of England Children's Society (formerly the 'Waifs and Strays') closed in 1971. A link with the London area for 35 years was provided by the Middlesex Edward VII Memorial Hostel at Collington Manor, now demolished, and which had previously been the home of Mr. Daniel Mayer. This was bought in 1930 by the trustees of the Middlesex Memorial Fund and was a school for delicate children until 1962 when it became a short-stay hostel for Middlesex children. When the Middlesex County Council was absorbed into the Greater London administration three years later, Collington Manor was sold. An entirely local venture is Jubilee House, Amherst Road, which was acquired by the Central Aid Council, now the Bexhill Council of Social Service, and opened by the Countess De La Warr, then mayoress of the borough, in the Silver Jubilee year of King George V's reign. It provides individual accommodation for elderly ladies and continues to be maintained entirely voluntarily.

Since the second world war there have been important additions to the list of convalescent and residential homes in the borough. The first was the acquisition in 1946 of the former Loreto Convent, Buckhurst Road, by the Embankment Fellowship Centre, now known as the Ex-Service Fellowship Centres. This is now Hollenden House, named after Lord Hollenden who was chairman of the Centre, and it provides accommodation for men who have served in the Armed Forces or Merchant Navy. It was extended in 1957 and again some ten years later by the addition of a large wing, at which time the older part of the building was modernised. The formal opening in connection with this undertaking was held in the summer of 1969.

In 1955 there was opened in Terminus Avenue the handsome Georgian building which was a convalescent home for members of the Hearts of Oak Benefit Society, but in 1964 it was sold to the London County Council and is now administered as a holiday home by the Greater London Council. On the East Parade in 1958 the then Lord Mayor of London (Sir Denis Truscott), a leading figure in the printing industry, opened the fine convalescent home of the National Union of Printing, Bookbinding and Paperworkers (now the Society of Graphic and Allied Trades), to which a staff annexe was added six years later.

A local enterprise is that of 'Ardath', Hastings Road, which is administered under the management of the East Sussex County Housing Association for the Aged, and which was opened in 1960 by the Marchioness of Abergavenny, wife of the association's president. In 1959 the former School of Domestic Economy, Pages Avenue, became a holiday home under the auspices of the Stars Organisation

for Spastics. The National Advertising Benevolent Society acquired the handsome property and grounds of Peter House, a former rectory of St. Peter's Church but which had latterly been a nursing home, and on the site residential and convalescent homes for Society members were completed in 1964, the ancient association being retained with the name 'Peterhouse'.

The East Sussex County Council maintains two homes in Bexhill for elderly people, St. Bridget's, in St. John's Road, taken over in 1955 and which was one of the first major residences built when the town began to expand, and Haldane House, Cooden Drive, which was acquired in 1963 after having been a private children's home for a number of years. Both homes have been considerably extended. One of the Methodist Homes for the Aged was completed in 1970 between Little Common Road and Collington Lane West, a venture which had been encouraged by the interest of Dr. Leslie Weatherhead, the distinguished minister of the City Temple for many years, who came to Bexhill on retirement.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Royal Visits

DURING NEARLY 150 years Bexhill has been honoured with more royal visits than might have been expected for a town of its size. The most memorable was that of Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh in October 1966, the first official visit to the borough by a reigning monarch.

The first royal occasion of which there is a record, however, was in 1834 when the Queen's great-great-grandmother, Princess (afterwards Queen) Victoria, drove to a meet of Mr. Arthur Brook's Harriers. The Princess, who in anticipation of her accession to the throne, and much to the annoyance of her uncle King William IV, was taken by her mother, the Duchess of Kent, on a number of provincial visits. On this occasion she stayed at the distinctive pillared house on the sea front at St. Leonards later an office of the Ministry of Social Security. The young Princess enjoyed a ride over the marshes with the hounds and a kill took place within the present borough boundary. As a memento of her visit she presented Mr. Brook's son, Arthur Sawyer, who succeeded to the mastership of the Harriers the following year, with a silver hunting horn which he carried for 55 years.

Thirty years later the attractions of hunting brought two visits by the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII. During a convalescence in February 1864 he attended a meet of the East Sussex foxhounds on Sidley Green at the invitation of the Master, Mr. H. M. Curteis, of Windmill Hill. The Prince drove from St. Leonards, accompanied by the Princess, to be welcomed by a company of some 400 riders and foot followers. A detailed account of the day's sport, which began with hounds finding at Cooden, was published in the *Sussex Express*. Two days later the Prince was at Bexhill for a meet of the Harriers under the mastership of Mr. Brook, and again the Princess accompanied her husband from St. Leonards but did not follow the hounds.

After Viscount and Viscountess Cantelupe had established themselves at the restored Manor House in 1892 they entertained lavishly, and their first royal visitor

was Prince Henry of Battenberg in 1893. He married Queen Victoria's youngest daughter, Princess Beatrice, and died in 1896 while returning from the Ashanti campaign in West Africa.

In the spring of 1895 the Duchess of Teck, mother of the future Queen Mary, was the guest of Lord and Lady Cantelupe and she gave her patronage to a concert at St. Leonards (there being no adequate public hall in Bexhill at that time) in aid of St. Barnabas' school funds, Lord Cantelupe being people's warden at St. Barnabas' Church. The Duchess, who was one of the most popular royal figures of the time, presented awards at a St. John Ambulance Association ceremony held in the school building (now the Bexhill branch of the East Sussex County Library), accompanied the Manor House party in attending St. Barnabas' Church, and visited the Metropolitan Convalescent Home in Old Town. The Duchess paid another visit to Bexhill, this time accompanied by the Duke, at Whitsun 1896 when she opened the Kursaal, which had been built by Earl De La Warr (as he had then become) and which stood where the Sailing Club is now. This was one of the most memorable days in the town's history and the festivities included a concert in the Manor House grounds given by the White Viennese Band which was at Bexhill for the summer season. When the Duchess died the following year a memorial service was held at St. Barnabas' Church. In August 1909 Prince Alexander, youngest son of the Duke and Duchess of Teck, and who became the Earl of Athlone during the first world war, came to inspect a Church Lads Brigade camp at Veness Gap on South Cliff.

Bexhill received visits from both daughters of Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein who married Princess Helena, third daughter of Queen Victoria. The young Princess Louise Augusta came to open a Church Army home in Egerton Road in November 1907 and in May 1933 her elder sister, Princess Helena Victoria, opened Bexhill Hospital. Shortly before her death in 1957 Princess Marie-Louise, as the younger sister was later known, wrote a successful autobiography 'My Memories of Six Reigns'.

The first world war saw two visits by the Duke of Connaught, a former Governor-General of Canada, who inspected the Canadian Army training school headquarters at the Metropole Hotel and the trench warfare training area south of Cooden Drive. These visits were made in June 1917 and November 1918. October 1930 saw the first of two visits by the Duke of York (afterwards King George VI), who first came as president of the Queen's Hospital for Children to open an annexe to its Little Folk's Home at Little Common. His second visit, when he was accompanied by the Duchess (now the Queen Mother) was in December 1935 to open the De La Warr Pavilion.

King George V and Queen Mary, then staying at Eastbourne, inspected the building of the De La Warr Pavilion in March 1935. Their Majesties had motored to Cooden Beach Hotel, then owned by the De La Warr family, and

where they were entertained by Earl and Countess De La Warr, then mayor and mayoress of Bexhill. After being shown a model of the Pavilion the King expressed a wish to visit the site and this was hurriedly arranged. As president of the National Association of Boys Clubs, the Duke of Gloucester came to Bexhill in July 1938, inspected the site of the Sports Centre and visited the Athletic Club's camp in the High Woods. The Duchess of Gloucester came in November 1956 to open the Church of England junior school of St. Peter and St. Paul.

In January 1946 Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, brought her three children to stay at a guest house in Woodville Road. The townspeople respected a request for privacy and the Duchess and her children enjoyed an undisturbed seaside holiday. The Queen came to Cooden as a little girl, and in May 1951 drove through Bexhill on her way from Hastings to Lewes. In Old Town she had a special greeting for Miss V. M. Synge, of Chantry Cottage, the local divisional commissioner for Girl Guides, who had been captain of the 1st Buckingham Palace company to which Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret had belonged.

The visit of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh in 1966 was made in a day's tour of East Sussex which also included Battle, Rye, Hastings and Eastbourne. In this crowded programme the arrangements at Bexhill and the town's welcome were exemplary and the subsequent gracious letter from Buckingham Palace was far more than a mere official acknowledgment. Her Majesty and the Duke were received at the De La Warr Pavilion by the Mayor (Councillor Mrs. M. E. Ackland) and the Corporation, and leading citizens had the honour of presentation. Her Majesty toured the Pavilion, which had been opened 31 years earlier by her parents, spoke to representative ex-Service veterans from Hollenden House and met members of detachments from the public services of the borough. The town's Floral Group, which staged an impressive exhibition, delighted the Queen with the gift of a basket containing two model Corgis, ingeniously constructed from beech leaves over wire frames. Two members of the Group were invited to take this to Buckingham Palace. Subsequently the Queen and the Duke visited an East Sussex County Council children's home in Sutherland Avenue before proceeding to Eastbourne.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

20th Century Wonders

A FEW NOTES on some dates in local aviation and broadcasting may be of interest both to younger and older readers. The first aeroplane landing at Bexhill was in July 1911 during a race between London and Paris organised by the now defunct London newspaper *The Standard.* Intending to land at Brighton, the French pilot of a Caudron bi-plane came down on South Cliff, and a crowd of some hundreds hurriedly assembled to see the machine refuelled and take off again. In August 1912 Bexhillians saw the water-plane of the famous aviator Grahame-White touring the south coast under the auspices of the *Daily Mail,* a newspaper which, under Lord Northcliffe, did much to encourage flying in the early days. A forced landing was made by a Bleriot monoplane in a field off Chantry Lane in March 1914, the Eastbourne pilot having engine trouble. The machine was towed to a Bexhill garage for repairs.

Sir Alan Cobham's air circus, which gave many people their first experience of flying, visited Little Common in 1933, and the mayor (Earl De La Warr) led a number of local 'notables' in having a flight. In 1931, however, his lordship had flown from London, landing on Cooden golf course, in order to attend the opening of Bexhill's new head post office in Devonshire Square. In that year also the flight of the famous German airship the Graf Zeppelin had been seen clearly over the town.

A notable link with early aviation history was the work of Mr. Gustavus Green, who came to Bexhill in 1897, and from cycle making became the first successful British designer of aeroplane engines, his small workshop being in Victoria Road. Many of his engines were used in aircraft during the first world war, but they proved somewhat heavy for the power given and at the request of the authorities Mr. Green concentrated on the production of motor-torpedo boat engines. He retired to Twickenham in the 1920s and died in 1964 shortly before he would have reached his hundredth birthday.

Early experiments in wireless telegraphy were made in 1905 from Martello Tower No. 55 at Normans Bay, the only one that remains of the 12 built along the parish foreshore. The system was that invented by Mr. A. T. M. Johnson who, with an Eastbourne solicitor, formed a company and obtained a licence from the Postmaster General. The undertaking, known as the Johnson Secret Wireless Telegraphy Syndicate, was later reported to have sold American and Canadian rights for £200,000. Among early experimenters in the town were the Rev. E. H.

Leale, the first Vicar of St. Stephen's Church, and Mr. R. C. Carter, afterwards the Borough Electrical Engineer, who transmitted messages to each other over short distances. A local radio society was formed in 1923 and soon had 50 members. In that year the results of a general election were first heard over the wireless in Bexhill, a receiving apparatus and loudspeakers being installed at the Motor Mart. The results were also shown on the screen at St. George's Cinema in Town Hall Square.

The first broadcast from Bexhill was in 1926 when the British Broadcasting Company relayed a concert by the municipal orchestra from the Pavilion, the former Kursaal, through the local telephone exchange and via Eastbourne to London. In 1937 the first television demonstration in the town was arranged by Mr. Norman Blackburne, a well-known local radio pioneer. His Master's Voice Company installed a set at his home in Pear Tree Lane, where reception from Alexandra Palace exceeded expectations.

Bexhill has an important place in television history for the famous inventor John Logie Baird lived from 1941 until his death in 1946 at a house in Station Road now marked by a commemorative plaque.

APPENDIX I

TRANSLATION OF LATIN and Anglo-Saxon Charter recording King Offa of Mercia's grant of land to found and endow St. Peter's Church (see illustration No. 18.):

In the name of our lord God and saviour. What is done for this world barely lasts until death, but what is done for eternal life remains forever after death. Therefore it is for everyone with deep forethought of mind to ponder and consider how with the fleeting possessions of this world he may obtain for his treasure the abodes of heavenly promise. Wherefore I, Offa, king of the English, for the good of my soul and for the love of God, and in accordance with my former promise grant in eternal possession to Almighty God and to the venerable Bishop Oswald (of Selsey, 765-780) a certain piece of land in Sussex for the building there of a church (monasterium) and the endowing of the church (basilicam) so that it may be seen to serve the praise of God and the honour of the saints, that is, 8 hides in the place which is called Bexhill as set forth in the bounds.

These are the bounds of the 8 hides of inland of the people of Bexhill. Firstly at the servants' tree, from the servants' tree south to the treacherous place, so along the shore over against Cooden cliff, eastward and so up on to the old boundary dyke, so north to Kewhurst, and so to the Benetings' stream, and so north through Shortwood to the boundary beacon, from the beacon to the bold men's ford, from the ford along the marsh to the road bridge, from the bridge along the ditch to Beda's spring, from the spring south along the boundary thus to the servant's tree.

These are the gavolland of the outland of Bexhill, in these places which are called by these names: At Barnhorne 3 hides, at Worsham 1 hide, at Ibba's wood 1 hide, at Crowhurst 8 hides, at Ridge 1 hide, at Gyllingas 2 hides, at Foxham and Black Brooks 1 hide, at Icklesham 3 hides; with all things pertaining thereto, field, woods, meadows, fisheries. Let the aforesaid land remain from this day, given as I have said for me in the name of God, free from all royal exactions and bound to the use of those serving God, but on this condition: that after this day, this gift be returned to the episcopal see which is called Selsey. If anyone at any time in great or small degree dares to reduce this gift made by me, let him know that he will incur the penalty for his presumption in the stern judgment of the all-powerful God, and will not escape from a bad hearing.

These are the bounds of Icklesham, to the pool in the hollow at the cliff, out on to the middle of the brook, so to Tatta's corner of land, to the moor, to Eadwine's valley as far as the boundary of Kent, then west along the middle of the bathing brook.

This Charter was written in the year 772 from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the 10th of the indiction, on the 15th day of the month of August.

I, Offa, king of the Mercians, as the power was conceded to me by God who reigns, have confirmed this Charter of gift, signing it with my own hand, and placed the sign of the holy cross.

I, Ecgberht, king of Kent, have agreed and signed.

I, Jaenberht, archbishop (of Canterbury, 765-792) by the grace of God, have signed.

I, Cynewulf, king of the West Saxons, have agreed and signed this gift.

I, Eadberht, bishop (of Mercia, 764-781), have agreed and signed.

I, Oswald, bishop (of Selsey, 765-780), have signed the gift made to me.

I, Righeah, bishop, have agreed.

I, Diora, bishop, have signed.

I, Oswald, alderman of the South Saxons, have agreed.

I, Osmund, alderman, have confirmed.

I, Aelfweald, alderman, have acquiesced.

I, Oslac, alderman, have signed.

And these witnesses were also present whose names are written below:

Botwine (abbot)	Eata	Heahberht
Brorda	Berhtwald	Esne
Huithyse	Baldraed	Bryne
Stidberht	Cyne	Ealdraed
Lulling	Berht	Byrnhere
Aemele, prefect		

All of the shire.

All these agreed, signed and confirmed.

These are the land boundaries of Barnhorne, firstly at the mossy spring, from the spring south into the valley, from the valley up on to the little heath, to the goblin's spring, so south and east to the old road, along the road to the old boundary mark which stands on the east side of the road, to the deep valley, to the reed pond. From the pond to the five roads, and south to the red ditch, along the ditch to Picknill and so south by the eastern moor to the angle, so east to the yew enclosure, so north to the wood, and so south to Cylla's hill, from the hill to Cylla's spring, west along the stream to Thunor's clearing, and so west along the stream on the outside of the salt marsh, and so north to the black brook, up along the stream to the swine enclosure. North along the boundary to the slaughter rubbish pit (siferthingc steorfa), and so north to the muddy ford, and so up on to the old dyke, eastwards along the dyke, and thus to the mossy spring.

APPENDIX II

CIVIC PRAYER AND 1972 CHARTER CELEBRATIONS SYMBOL

This prayer, said by the Mayor's Chaplain at Bexhill Town Council meetings, emphasises the unity and purpose of the Borough:–

> Almighty God our heavenly Father, who of Thy divine providence hath entrusted Thy servants with the governance of this town, grant to each Thine aid and a sense of responsibility for the faithful discharge of this ministry.
>
> Endue the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors and all who share in the administration of this borough with devotion to Thy will, genuine concern for those committed to their charge and wisdom in all their deliberations, that seeking to fulfil Thy divine purpose in our common life, their labours may redound to Thy glory and the well-being of those they serve.
>
> Inspire our people with the spirit of service for the common good and an earnest desire to enrich the goodly inheritance we have received from our fathers.
>
> These our petitions we make in the name of Him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, even Jesus Christ our Lord and master.

This prayer finds emphasis in the following symbol designed by Councillor D. A. Kimber (Mayor 1970-71) for the 1200th anniversary of the grant by King Offa of Mercia in AD 772. of land to found and endow St. Peter's Church, which marked the beginning of Bexhill's recorded history:-

The following is a description of the symbol by the Rector of St. Peter's (Canon M. D. Townroe, R.D.):-

> At the heart of the symbol is the Cross because the Charter Celebration Year concerns every aspect of our Christian heritage stretching back over 1200 years.
>
> Woven around the Cross are the Keys of St. Peter because this heritage finds its known starting point in the granting of a Charter in A.D. 772 by King Offa the Great for the building and endowing of the Parish Church.
>
> The Crown above expresses both our debt to royal favour in the past and our loyalty to our present Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth.
>
> The use of the Crest of the Coat of Arms of the Borough declares the intention that these celebrations should be shared in by all citizens of the borough.
>
> The circle, symbol of unity and eternity, expresses the desire that the Year may foster civic loyalties and a stronger sense of community among all citizens through the shared resolve to 'hold fast to all that is good'.

APPENDIX III

CHRONOLOGY

772

King Offa of Mercia's charter granting land to found and endow St. Peter's Church.

1066

Bexhill devastated in Norman invasion; church lands later given to Rape of Hastings.

1148

Church lands restored to See of Chichester.

1250

Great damage by Channel storms.

1253

Bishop Richard de la Wyck's last visit to Bexhill.

1287

Damage to Pevensey Levels by great storm (Old Winchelsea destroyed).

1558

St. Peter's Church registers started.

1588

Cooden defences against Spanish Armada.

1561

Crown acquires Manor of Bexhill from See of Chichester.

1570

Manor of Bexhill granted to Thomas Sackville, 1st Earl of Dorset.

1597

Dr. Thomas Pye opens school in Chantry Chapel.

1729

Severe damage caused by freak storm.

1735

Down Mill built.

1748

Dutch East Indiaman *Amsterdam* wrecked at Bulverhythe.

1755

Parish workhouse built.

1785

Bexhill Harriers established.

1795

Naval signalling station at Galley Hill.

1804

Arrival of King's German Legion at Bexhill camp.
First Martello towers built.
Coal mine venture ends in failure.

1819

King George III's birthday celebrated by dinner for local veterans at Bell Hotel.

1822

Bexhill beat Hastings in four-a-side cricket match.

1825

Belle Hill Wesleyan chapel opened.

1828

Sidley Green battle between Preventive men and smugglers.

1830

Parish rectory (afterwards Peter House) built.

1832

Bexhill included in East Sussex Parliamentary division under Reform Act.

1834

Parish Poor Law duties transferred to new Battle Union and parish workhouse later closed.

1835

Princess (later Queen) Victoria attends meet of Harriers.

1837

'Turf' Wesleyan chapel at Little Common opened.

1840

Wesleyan mission founded at Sidley.

1842

St. Mark's Church built.

1846

Opening of Lewes to Bulverhythe railway with station at Bexhill.

1853

St. Peter's boys school opened.
Wesleyan mission started at Normans Bay.

1854

Hastings and St. Leonards Gas Company authorised to supply Bexhill.

1855

St. Mark's school opened.

1857

First division of Bexhill by creation of St. Mark's parish.

1859

'Turf' chapel re-built.

1860

Duke of Cambridge attends gunnery demonstration at Cooden.

1862

St. Peter's school girls department opened.

1863

Scheme for development of Pages estate.

1864

Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII) at Bexhill meets of East Sussex Hunt and Harriers, accompanied by Princess Alexandra.

1865

Church of England school opened at Sidley.
Whale washed ashore at Normans Bay.

1866

St. James' Church opened at Normans Bay.

1872

Last Court Leet of Hundred of Bexhill.
Lieutenant-Colonel H. Lane first local justice of the peace.

1873

Building begun on Cramp's Farm estate.
Primitive Methodist chapel opened at Sidley.

1878

Restoration of St. Peter's Church.

1879

Working men's club opened in Holliers Hill.

1880

Typhoid epidemic leads to demand for local authority powers.
First sale of De La Warr estate land for residential development.

1881

Old Town home opened by Metropolitan Convalescent Institution.

1882

Licence to build sea wall and esplanade granted to 7th Earl De La Warr and co-trustees under Settled Estates Act 1877; first plans for resort development.

1883

East Parade embankment constructed.

Application for Bexhill to be made local government district.

Parliamentary Bill for water and gas company promoted by 7th Earl De La Warr and associates.

1884

Bexhill Local Board of Health formed under Order of Local Government Board.

1885

Bexhill in new Rye Parliamentary division and Colonel A. M. Brookfield elected Member.

Bexhill Water and Gas Company formed under Act of Parliament.

Town lit by oil lamps.

'Iron' Church at Sidley, mission church of Good Shepherd in Little Common Road, St. Peter's girls and infants schools in Barrack Road, Holmwood (first independent school) and first local bank branch opened.

1886

First main drainage scheme completed.

Wrestwood waterworks constructed.

Devonshire Hotel built.

Mr. John Webb agrees with De La Warr estate to build West Parade and adjoining roads.

Mission opened at Normans Bay.

Bexhill in new St. Leonards Wesleyan Circuit.

1887

Drill Hall opened for Artillery Volunteers.

Ancaster House school site bought by Rev. F. R. Burrows.

Public gas supply started from Bexhill works.

First piped water supply.

Bexhill Chronicle started.

Victoria Hall opened by Congregationalists.

1888

Domestic piped water supplied for first time.

Streets of Bexhill lit by gas.

First Volunteer Fire Brigade formed.

Institute opened and Old Town Clock erected to commemorate Queen Victoria's golden jubilee of 1887.

Egerton Park started.

1889

First election for East Sussex County Council, Bexhill having one member.

1890

Sackville Hotel opened.

1891

Wedding of Viscount Cantelupe and Hon. Muriel Brassey.
Restoration of Manor House started.
St. Barnabas' Church consecrated and parish formed.
Institute of Charity allowed to open Roman Catholic mission.
Bexhill Golf Club's Galley Hill course opened.
Harriers acquired by Viscount Cantelupe and new kennels built at Little Common.

1892

Parkhurst Hall opened.
Salvation Army corps started.
Reconstruction of Sackville railway arch.

1893

Visit of Prince Henry of Battenberg to Manor House.
St. Mary Magdalene's Roman Catholic Church and St. Barnabas' School (now County Library) opened.
Rowing Club formed and first regatta held.

1894

Local Board of Health succeeded by Urban Council under Local Government Act, 1894.
Nazareth House opened.
First engagement of Stanislaus Wurm and the White Viennese Band.

1895

Duchess of Teck's first visit to Manor House.
Town Hall opened by Lord Mayor of London; Marine and York Hotels and York Hall opened.
Marina sea-front acquired by Urban Council.
Ornamental gates erected at De La Warr Parade.
Viscount Cantelupe and Mr. R. Kersey apply for electricity undertaking licence (later acquired by Urban Council).

1896

Viscount Cantelupe succeeds as 8th Earl De La Warr.

Opening of Kursaal by Duchess of Teck; of the Sackville Road Wesleyan Methodist Church, Baptist church hall, and East Parade cycle boulevard.

Bexhill-on-Sea Observer started.

Australian Test XI play Earl De La Warr's team on Manor House ground.

1897

Opening of Congregational Church and Buckhurst Road head post office.

Management of the Down taken over by Urban Council with De La Warr estate reserving manorial rights.

Urban Council take over appointment of overseers from St. Peter's parish Vestry.

1898

Beulah Baptist Church, Hamilton Hall and St. Barnabas' boys school opened.

First public telephone service with 33 subscribers.

Grand Duke Michael of Russia attends local cycle races.

Sweet Willow Wood waterworks opened.

1899

Cantelupe (later Bexhill) Croquet Club formed.

Earl De La Warr goes to South Africa as war correspondent for the *Globe* newspaper.

1900

Consecration of St. Stephen's Church with formation of parish; dedication of St. Andrew's Church.

Metropole and Wilton Court hotels opened.

Mr. J. M. Glover, Director of Music at Drury Lane Theatre, becomes lessee of the Kursaal.

Electricity undertaking started.

Earl De La Warr's triumphant return from South African war.

Celebrations on birth of future 9th Earl De La Warr.

1901

Death of Queen Victoria and Accession of King Edward VII.

St. George's Presbyterian Church, Clinch Green cemetery and Down Artillery drill hall opened.

Egerton Park and West Parade acquired by Urban Council from Mr. John Webb.

First local omnibus service started.

1902

Bexhill granted charter of incorporation; borough divided into five wards and first municipal elections held.

First motor races in England along East and De La Warr parades.

First Tradesmen's Ball held.

Bexhill West to Crowhurst branch railway opened and Central station completed.

1903

First of 8th Earl De La Warr's two mayoralties.

Cantelupe Road magistrates court and police station opened.

Borough Education Committee formed under 1902 Education Act.

Marine Hotel re-opened as Roberts Marine Mansions holiday home for drapery trade.

First Whit-Monday Horse Show.

Liberal victory in Rye division by-election.

Manor House leased to Mr. August Neven Du Mont.

1904

Lloyd George addresses Liberal meeting.

Bexhill granted second county councillor.

Water and Gas Company Act of Parliament for Hazards Green works.

1905

Re-engagement of Stanislaus Wurm and White Viennese Band at Kursaal.

Cooden home of Metropolitan Convalescent Institution and Granville Hotel opened.

Wireless experiments at No. 55 Martello tower, Normans Bay.

1906

Mayoral chain presented by Baron Brassey.

Lord Mayor of London opens Egerton Park extension.

Mr. G. L. (later Sir George) Courthope elected M.P. for Rye division, destined to sit for 39 years.

Hastings to Cooden tramway service opened.

1907

Lord Brassey elected first honorary freeman of borough and then mayor.

Borough coat-of-arms granted.

Opening of St. Mary Magdalene Roman Catholic Church, Christ Church Primitive Methodist (now Springfield Road Methodist) Church, Baptist mission at Sidley, and first part of Down elementary schools.

Commercial Association (later Society) formed.

Cowbeech waterworks site acquired by Water and Gas Company.

Lecture Society founded.

First public bowling green opened.

Hastings gas works at Glyne Gap and Hazards Green waterworks completed.

1908

Hon. T. A. Brassey elected mayor.

Town Hall extension opened and stone laid by Lord Buckhurst (later 9th Earl De La Warr).

Prince Alexander of Teck (later Earl of Athlone) visits Church Lads Brigade camp.

Pergola opened in Egerton Park.

Normanhurst Court and Cave Austin Ltd. fires.

1909

First part of All Saints' Church, Sidley, dedicated; south aisle added to St. Barnabas' Church by gift of Miss Evelyne Clarke.

1910

Death of King Edward VII and Accession of King George V; first Proclamation of monarch at Bexhill.

Central Parade, town's first cinema (Bijou, Town Hall Square) and roller skating rink opened.

West Parade collapse.

1911

Colonnade opened by 1st Earl Brassey.

First aeroplane landing at Bexhill.

Further West Parade collapse.

1912

Opening of Gooden golf course and Cooden telephone exchange.

Polegrove site bought by Corporation.

P. and O. liner *Oceana* sunk off Bexhill and drifter *Gamester* beached after fire at sea.

1913

St. Mary Magdalene Roman Catholic Church consecrated; opening of Church of the Good Shepherd and Malet Hall; and of Haddon Hall Baptist church at Sidley.

East and De La Warr parades acquired by Corporation and ornamental gates demolished.

Bexhill granted third county councillor.

1914

Outbreak of first world war.

Bexhill Head Postmaster appointed independent of Hastings.

Salvation Army Hall opened.

Start of borough Museum.

1915

Death of 8th Earl De La Warr on active service.
Bexhill Harriers dispersed.
Second Down drill hall opened.

1917

Bexhill Trust formed.

1918

The Armistice ends first world war hostilities.
Duke of Connaught inspects Canadian troops.
First attempt to form public library.

1919

Peace Day and Ex-Servicemen's Day celebrations.
Sir Leicester Harmsworth buys Manor House and estate.
Collington Wood purchased by Corporation.
First Maidstone and District Motor Services route through Bexhill.

1920

War memorials unveiled at Marina and Little Common.
First municipal housing scheme.

1921

Old Town walnut tree removed.

1923

Official opening of Polegrove recreation ground.
Rotary Club formed.

1924

St. Paul's Free Church opened.
Miller and Franklin's fire; fireman fatally injured.

1925

Bexhill Corporation Act passed.
Manor Court last held prior to Law of Property Act 1925 coming into force.
Highwoods golf course opened.
St. Wilfrid's School fire.
Land acquired for Buxton Drive recreation ground, Sidley.

1926

Borough acquires Bexhill Water and Gas Company.
Opening of Little Common Methodist Church; Grammar Schools, and Little Common recreation ground.
First concert broadcast from Bexhill.

1927

Silver jubilee of incorporation of borough.
Formal opening of Grammar Schools by Duchess of Atholl.

1928

Regatta revived after 20-year lapse.
London Road to Sidley completed.
Trams give way to trolley buses.
Pankhurst's Mill removed to Leigh, Kent.

1929

Bexhill petty seassional division formed.
First 'talkie' films shown at St. George's cinema (former Bijou).
First Labour candidate in Rye parliamentary division election.

1930

Duke of York (afterwards King George VI) opens Little Folk's Home annexe.
Union of Methodist churches.
All Saints' Church consecrated and parish formed and St. Michael's Church dedicated.
Coastguard station closed.

1931

Christian Science Church, Devonshire Square head post office and Cooden Beach hotel opened.
West Bexhill conventional district formed.
Rural Deanery of Battle and Bexhill inaugurated.

1932

First of 9th Earl De La Warr's three mayoralties.

1933

Bexhill Hospital opened by Princess Helena Victoria, and Egerton Park Pavilion by Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Walter Elliot).
Central Aid Council (Council of Social Service) and Hotels Association formed.
First August Week open bowling tournament.

1934

St. Augustine's Church consecrated and parish formed.
De La Warr Pavilion started.
Bexhill granted fourth county councillor.

1935

King George V and Queen Mary inspect De La Warr Pavilion site; Pavilion opened by Duke and Duchess of York (King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, now the Queen Mother).
Victoria to Hastings railway line electrified; visit of Lord Mayor of London.
Christian Science Church consecrated.
Gaiety theatre converted into cinema.

1936

Death of King George V and Accession of King Edward VIII; Abdication of King Edward VIII and Accession of King George VI.

New Cooden Beach railway station opened.

1937

Ritz cinema opened.

First television programme reception in Bexhill.

1938

Duke of Gloucester inspects Sports Centre site and visits Athletic Club camp in High Woods.

Belle Hill chapel, oldest Nonconformist place of worship in town, closed.

1939

Second world war.

Down senior schools completed.

Bexhill reception area for London children.

1940

Large-scale civilian evacuation of Bexhill, schools going to Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

St. Martha's Roman Catholic Church opened.

Bexhill Golf Club closed.

1942

Town centre damaged by 'tip-and-run' air raids.

1943

Down senior schools brought into scholastic use.

1944

'Doodle-bug' raids over town; coast lined by anti-aircraft defences.

Education Act deprives Bexhill of Part III (elementary) powers.

1945

V.E. and V.J. celebrations.

Barony conferred on Sir George Courthope, M.P.; Mr. W. N. Cuthbert, Mayor of Bexhill 1936–43, elected Member for Rye division.

1946

Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, and her children holiday at Bexhill.

Council of Churches formed.

1948

Bexhill transferred to Eastbourne Parliamentary division under Representation of the People Act 1948.

Borough electricity undertaking nationalised.

Chamber of Commerce formed from Commercial Society.

1949

Borough gas undertaking nationalised.

1950

Borough re-divided to form six municipal wards.

1951

Princess (now Queen) Elizabeth drives through Old Town en route from Hastings to Lewes.

Bexhill branch of the East Sussex County Library opened, also Sidley primary school.

1952

Death of King George VI and Accession of Queen Elizabeth II.

Golden jubilee of incorporation of borough; Lord Lieutenant of Sussex (Duke of Norfolk) and Sussex mayors attend special Town Council meeting for conferment of three honorary freedoms.

1954

Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of the Rosary opened.

Veteran Car Club rally on East Parade.

1955

New Rye parliamentary division formed to include Bexhill; Mr. B. Godman Irvine elected at general election.

1956

Duchess of Gloucester opens St. Peter and St. Paul junior school; reorganisation of local primary and infants schools.

1958

Lord Mayor of London opens printing trades convalescent home.

1959

St. Richard's Roman Catholic secondary school opened by Lord Longford (then Lord Pakenham).

1960

Silver jubilee of De La Warr Pavilion; first summer music festival with Hallé Orchestra.

Sackville Hotel closed and contents auctioned.

'Ardath' opened by East Sussex County Housing Association for the Aged.

1961

St. Mark's school closed; new Little Common county primary school opened; St. Mary Magdalen primary school moved to Nazareth House.

1962

Municipal water undertaking sold to Eastbourne Waterworks Company.

1963

Completed St. Augustine's Church consecrated.

Freighter *Aghios Georgios II* beached at Normans Bay after fire at sea.

1964

Closure of Bexhill West to Crowhurst branch railway line.

1965

Corporation purchase completed of Manor House and estate from Harmsworth trustees.

1966

Visit of Queen Elizabeth II and Duke of Edinburgh; first official visit to the borough by a reigning monarch.

1967

Closure of Bexhill gas works.

1969

Closure of Glyne Gap gas works.

1970

Revision of Bexhill county electoral districts.

APPENDIX IV

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